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The rule of law at the national and international levels

Strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/119, updates are presented on the assistance provided by the United Nations in relation to the rule of law at the national and international levels during the past 12 months, and a reflection on the progress made on key issues to strengthen the Organization's efforts in support of Member States is provided.

Insights are provided in the present report into mechanisms and practices that promote the effective implementation of international law by Member States, as well as the judicial and non-judicial mechanisms supported by the United Nations at the national level to address impunity for serious crimes under international law.

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I. Introduction

1. In the past year, profound political and security challenges have been seen in all parts of the world, sometimes eroding decades of progress made in securing accountability, transparency and the rule of law. The engagement of the United Nations in the collective efforts to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels has never been more critical. The rule of law is an accelerator towards the realization of the ambitious agenda in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, and in preventing conflict, sustaining peace and advancing the universal protection of human rights.

2. The United Nations continues to provide rule of law support to Member States in development, fragility, conflict and peacebuilding contexts. The Organization is moving towards a more coordinated and cohesive effort, tightening the development, peace and security and humanitarian nexus and promoting human rights and gender equality.

3. Relevant United Nations departments, agencies, funds and programmes are making significant progress in attaining system-wide strategic coordination and coherence on rule of law engagement and enhancing results, including through the global focal point arrangement for police, justice and corrections.[1] Advances have been made in policy development and implementation, improving joint efforts in countries and expanding partnerships to support national priorities to advance the rule of law.

4. In the previous report of the Secretary-General, however, it was recognized that United Nations support to Member States should evolve at a time when the Organization is improving prevention efforts, reorienting peacekeeping with more focused mandates and enhancing its preparedness to address emerging global threats (see A/72/268). Supporting Member States to achieve equal access to justice for all and respect for the rule of law is a complex and long-term endeavour. The stakes are often high. Situations of vacuum in the rule of law put at risk the social fabric of communities and the sovereignty of Member States.

5. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/119, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit his annual report on United Nations rule of law activities, addressing, in a balanced manner, the national and international dimensions of the rule of law. A particular emphasis is placed on efforts to improve the coordination, coherence and effectiveness of those activities.

II. United Nations support and activities to strengthen the rule of law

A. Promotion of the rule of law at the national level

6. The United Nations continued to support Member States on all continents to develop domestic capacities to strengthen the rule of law, some examples of which are presented below. United Nations assistance was provided specifically at the

[1] Established by the Secretary-General in 2012, the global focal point arrangement for the police, justice and corrections areas in the rule of law in post-conflict and other crisis situations has brought together complementary capacities in efforts to improve support for the rule of law on the ground, with a view to preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of violent conflict. The arrangement is not an entity, but acts as a single entry point for United Nations system-wide rule of law assistance.

request of Member States in alignment with their needs and priorities and consistent with United Nations policy to promote gender equality and human rights and to achieve peaceful and inclusive societies.

7. United Nations peace operations have spearheaded police, justice and corrections work through the current deployment of 11,000 police officers, 205 judicial affairs officers and 367 corrections officers in 12 operations, drawing on rapid deployment capacities. In close collaboration with the United Nations country team, this work is aimed at strengthening the rule of law by protecting civilians and supporting victims' rights, ensuring accountability for the most serious crimes and extending services provided by justice institutions to all populations to advance peace and stability. In non-mission contexts, the United Nations has delivered comprehensive support through its agencies, funds and programmes. The financial and political commitment extended by Member States to this critical work is appreciated.

1. Effective and functioning security, justice and corrections institutions

8. There have been troubling negative trends in all parts of the world relating to the undermining of the independence of the judiciary, including the politicized selection process of judges and limitations on the ability of courts to review the constitutionality of executive decisions. In some cases, the expansion of mandates of law enforcement agencies and security forces have led to violations of citizens' rights. The United Nations rule of law assistance is critical to help to reverse these trends, restore the specific functions of justice institutions and improve the delivery of justice services to populations.

9. In a number of countries, such as Afghanistan, Honduras, Eritrea, Nepal, Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka, the United Nations supported the development of legislation and policies to prohibit torture in interrogation and detention and promoted international human rights norms and standards in the administration of justice. In Mali, the Organization supported the development of legal frameworks that comply with human rights standards, such as the national border security policy and the strategy to prevent and combat violent extremism and terrorism.

10. In Liberia, an innovative joint programme with the United Nations facilitated the country's transition from peacekeeping to longer-term development support through the United Nations country team. It combines the United Nations peace and development capacities with pooled funding and supports the security sector to address conflict risks by collaborating with the early warning centre of the Economic Community of West African States in Monrovia. Part of the United Nations legacy is the improvement in people's access to justice and corrections services; notably, the Supreme Court of Liberia played a pivotal role in guiding the country to peacefully address electoral disputes.

11. In Guinea, authorities established mechanisms to ensure civilian control of security forces and to facilitate collaboration between judicial actors and civil society, resulting in the adjudication of 953 cases in priority districts and the release of 580 pretrial detainees (45 women). In Lebanon, the United Nations supported the authorities to launch their first training curriculum for 262 law enforcement personnel on conflict management, moving towards a community-oriented policing approach centred on people's security needs. In Somalia, a joint framework provides support to rule of law institutions within the broader United Nations effort to develop federal and state-level consensus on a justice architecture, resulting in a justice and corrections model.

12. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations supported internal security governance reforms to improve the protection of civilians, while the authorities

significantly increased the recruitment of vetted key personnel within the justice and security sectors, including outside the capital. In Mali, the Organization supported security sector efforts to carry out community-oriented policing, the extension of prison services and the return of judicial authorities in the north to help to restore confidence in State institutions.

13. In Haiti, the United Nations helped to strengthen accountability in the corrections sector by establishing an Audit and Evaluation Unit, which has been instrumental in improving conditions for 8,339 inmates. United Nations support has led to an increase in functioning provincial courts in Afghanistan, from 259 in 2004 to 420 in 2018, and in the number of judges, from 1,254 in 2004 to 2,169 in 2017.

14. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations initiative on prolonged detention saw the ratio of pretrial detainees to convicted prisoners fall below 50 per cent in Bunia prison for the first time, against a national average of 75 per cent. In South Sudan, processes on the review of cases and the release of detainees have become more efficient, with the daily average number of detainees decreasing from 50 in 2016 to 15 currently.

15. With regard to legislative reforms, the new Penal Code entered into force in Afghanistan, and laws to combat corruption were enacted. In the Sudan, the Public Prosecutions Act was adopted to reinforce the independence of the prosecution service. In Kenya, the United Nations is supporting the development of the Children's Act, which is based on the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to divert children from prison sentences. In Myanmar, the United Nations supported the drafting of interministerial procedures to coordinate and respond effectively to child abuse.

2. Security and armed violence reduction

16. This area of work is aimed at curbing the excessive use of force and human rights violations and abuses, including by militias and armed gangs, and addressing the lack of accountability for the misconduct of security forces. The approach of the United Nations in supporting security and armed violence reduction through a multi-stakeholder and inclusive format is key to finding a sustainable solution to security and safety.

17. In Iraq, the United Nations prioritized a balanced and inclusive approach to security sector transformation, improving State security and the provision of justice, strengthening public trust and reflecting the voice of civil society. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Organization supported community safety through the building of capacities and the coordination of mine action work, sustainable ammunition life cycle management and the implementation of a strategy on small arms and light weapons.

18. In El Salvador, United Nations support to community security has contributed to a significant decline in violence, with 60 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017, compared to 103 in 2015. In Guatemala, the development of people-centred community security approaches is intended to generate more opportunities for employment, reintegration and rehabilitation after sentences are served. In some areas affected by Boko Haram in Nigeria, the United Nations helped to establish eight regional community security and justice platforms, bringing together State actors and communities to implement security plans to stabilize communities pending the re-establishment of justice and security institutions. In Colombia, the Organization assisted local authorities in adopting a holistic approach to reduce crime and violence, particularly in urban areas with high rates of criminality.

19. In Pakistan, to improve community security and increase public confidence in the police, the United Nations supported 54 model police stations to enable police and communities to conduct dialogue. Eighty per cent of respondents to a survey found the police more accessible where model police stations exist, with more women benefiting from services. In South Sudan, the Organization improved the security of internally displaced persons seeking protection in the United Nations protected sites, enabling the investigation of serious incidents in those sites. The United Nations assisted the Government of Somalia to develop a national strategy to mitigate the threat of improvised explosive devices and to protect people in contaminated areas by coordinating mine action activities.

3. Accountability at the national level for serious crimes under international law

20. Some Member States have taken concrete steps to ensure accountability for serious crimes under international law, including for conflict-related sexual violence, through domestic judicial efforts. United Nations support has been instrumental in those efforts in situations in which progress has generally been slow and often compounded by a lack of political will, inadequate resources and victim and witness protection, and widespread impunity for crimes committed by both State and non-State actors.

21. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations continued to support the Special Criminal Court in the fight against impunity, with key personnel and other essential strategies and legislation in place, including a prosecution strategy based on a mapping by the United Nations of human rights violations. The capacity of judicial authorities has improved, resulting in the trials and convictions of war criminals. A specialized unit established to respond rapidly to sexual violence crimes, known as "UMIRR", was operationalized in Bangui. The Organization assisted in the arrest of high-profile members of armed groups to prevent the occurrence of destabilizing crimes and handed 225 suspects to the authorities.

22. The Democratic Republic of the Congo accelerated trials in the military justice system with the assistance of the Prosecution Support Cells and delivered 235 convictions, including of senior military officials. More female magistrates were deployed to the eastern part of the country. A total of 1,726 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were registered and 643 judgments were delivered. Several landmark trials resulting in the convictions of senior leaders for rape and sexual slavery in South Kivu Province are to be welcomed.

23. In Guinea, dedicated expertise was deployed to the national panel of judges investigating human rights violations occurring in 2009, including sexual violence, leading to the indictment of a former Head of State and 16 other individuals. The Government has recently formed a steering committee to organize their trials. In Darfur, Sudan, the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes in Darfur has successfully prosecuted ex-combatants of armed movements, but notably there has been no investigation of conflict-related sexual violence.

4. Other transitional justice initiatives

24. The demand for justice for past human rights violations and abuses remains a priority for communities recovering from conflicts and crises. The United Nations approach to supporting transitional justice has taken into consideration political sensitivities and has been inclusive and victim-centred, with the participation of women increasing.

25. In Colombia, the establishment of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission and a missing persons search unit, which are gender-balanced and inclusive, is to be welcomed. The Commission has identified approximately 7,000

cases, including cases of sexual and gender-based violence and enforced disappearance, and collective reparation plans are aimed at meeting the needs of 20,486 victims of armed conflict. In the Gambia, the United Nations assisted authorities to understand people's grievances and aspirations and supported South-South exchanges on lessons learned, resulting in the establishment of a truth, reconciliation and reparations commission that complies with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles). In Guatemala, United Nations support to the prosecution services to gather evidence has led to the identification of 1,856 conflict-affected victims. In Kosovo,[2] the Organization supported the identification of 1,658 missing persons and the establishment of the first multi-ethnic resource centre.

26. In Libya, assistance was provided to address tensions between the Tawergha and Misrata communities, including by facilitating high-level dialogues on the return of internally displaced persons and reparations for those persons to advance the transitional justice component of the local agreement. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the United Nations facilitated the drafting of a law by civil society and victims that led to the operationalization of the truth commission in 2017. In South Sudan, the Organization supported the establishment of victims' groups within protection of civilians sites to provide psychosocial services and supported consultations on the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission as part of the peace agreement. In Tunisia, the United Nations continued to support the specialized chambers to adjudicate referred cases, and the Truth and Dignity Commission, which successfully organized 8 public hearings and concluded 46,302 individual hearings, including testimonies from 9,934 women.

5. Access to justice, in particular for marginalized groups

27. Recognizing that weak rule of law institutions undermine protection and limit inclusion, United Nations development and humanitarian actors are partnering to achieve solutions that are balanced to benefit refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and host communities. In Lebanon, for example, a needs assessment helped to standardize efforts of the municipal police as early responders to address tensions among Syrian refugees and host communities, and in Myanmar, the United Nations supported the implementation of a needs assessment on housing, land and property rights for internally displaced persons and persons at risk of statelessness.

28. In Darfur, Sudan, United Nations support has been instrumental in the peaceful resolution of land disputes and intercommunal conflict among marginalized communities, including through 114 rural courts and the training of their judges. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Organization supported national partners to improve a non-discriminatory, free legal aid system for indigent persons, and in 2017 supported the provision of legal aid to 18,825 beneficiaries (48 per cent women). In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, prison inspections and legal aid reduced the rate of imprisonment and led to the release of 1,200 pretrial detainees. In Guinea-Bissau, five Access to Justice Centres provided free legal aid to 10,097 people (21 per cent women) in 2017, an increase of 14 per cent from 2016.

29. In Jordan, the United Nations helped 200 women and girls to access legal advice and psychological counselling through legal clinics established in communities hosting Syrian refugees. In Kyrgyzstan, the Organization supported 11 free legal aid centres to assist 4,539 people and provided training for 1,896 justice actors, including on the rights of people with disabilities. In Timor-Leste, the United Nations supported access to justice clinics, enabling 227 people (50 women) in rural areas to access free

[2] References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

legal aid services. Mobile courts operated in municipalities without permanent courts, resolving 454 cases involving 971 users (312 women) in 2017. In Cambodia and Viet Nam, the Organization developed training tools for judges and prosecutors on addressing child exploitation cases, and in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, a mobile aid project provided assistance to 30 victims of human trafficking.

6. Security and justice for women and girls

30. Improving women's access to justice is a priority for the Organization to address chronic inequalities that many women and girls experience in their daily lives. The underlying circumstances enabling violence against women, such as mass displacement and negative coping mechanisms that often lead to, for instance, early or forced marriages, must be addressed. Member States should also take steps to immediately address instances of incitement and encouragement of gender-based violence, particularly by senior State officials.

31. Many States continued to make progress in providing security and justice for women. In Afghanistan, a year after piloting the violence against women courts in Kabul Province, the Supreme Court established similar courts in 15 provinces. By 2017, those courts had issued verdicts in 164 cases. In addition, specialized prosecution units have been established within the Attorney General's offices in 18 provinces. The number of female judges has doubled to 213 since 2014, there has been a 28 per cent increase in female police officers from 2016, and evidence shows that more survivors accessed these specialized facilities and filed complaints. In the State of Palestine, through United Nations support, the number of judges specializing in cases of violence against women has doubled. The United Nations joint programme in Somalia supported 4,633 survivors through one-stop rape crisis centres by providing safe houses and essential services.

32. The military operation to liberate Iraq from Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has led to a surge in the number of displaced persons. The United Nations collaborated to provide basic services in shelters, including legal aid for victims of sexual and gender-based violence. In Latin America, the Organization is helping judicial actors to address the reprehensible phenomena of "femicides" and wrongful gender stereotyping in the judiciary.

33. In Mali, the United Nations supported a one-stop centre in Bamako to provide medical, psychological, economic and legal assistance to survivors; the assignment of 40 police officers in Gao and Timbuktu has facilitated gender-responsive services. In the north and centre of Mali, sensitization training is helping traditional and religious leaders to reconsider practices that promote violence against women. A similar one-stop centre established in Ramallah, State of Palestine, has received 2,224 cases. In Nepal, it is to be hoped that a United Nations-supported women's mentorship programme and internship funding for female lawyers will introduce more female practitioners in the legal system. Through United Nations assistance in Ukraine, more than 300 survivors received legal and psychological support.

7. Anti-corruption

34. Corruption is a destructive practice, leading to serious political and social consequences and eroding trust between a State and its people. Corrupt practices often affect the integrity and impartiality of justice systems and the transparency of legislative processes. United Nations support to Member States to strengthen oversight mechanisms and combat corruption has been notable, but needs to be matched with equal commitment by Governments.

35. Established in 2016, the Afghanistan Anti-Corruption Justice Centre had, by April 2018, completed 34 investigations resulting in 101 convictions. The

Government also adopted a national strategy requiring key institutions to articulate plans for reform. In 2017, the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission processed five corruption cases. In Haiti, the Government reported that measures had been taken in relation to 35 per cent of 367 corruption investigations. In partnership with the World Bank, the United Nations has helped Tunisia and Nigeria recover millions of dollars lost as a result of corrupt activities.

36. The United Nations intensified its assistance to improve investigations of complex corruption cases in Ecuador, Egypt, Myanmar, the State of Palestine and small island developing States in the Pacific. The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala continued to provide support to the Office of the Public Prosecutor of Guatemala in high-profile investigations into links between illegal groups and public officials and helped to reinforce the rule of law by exposing corruption and proposing legal reforms.

8. Strengthening national institutions to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

37. Since the territorial defeat of ISIL in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations has prioritized the prevention of the resurgence of violence from returning fighters and further acts of terrorism through criminal justice approaches such as preventing radicalization to violence in prisons and initiatives that encourage social inclusion, mediation and access to jobs and services, especially for youth and women. The Organization has finalized 14 teaching modules for higher academic institutions on linkages between organized crime and terrorism, cybercrime and gender.

38. The United Nations has trained 4,000 criminal justice officials in key regions affected by terrorism and helped Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria to establish specialized counter-terrorism units with cross-border coordination. The Organization trained law enforcement and security officials on the protection of human rights while conducting counter-terrorism operations in Cameroon, Iraq, Jordan, Mali, Nigeria and Tunisia. For instance, Malian authorities operationalized a specialized unit to investigate terrorism and transnational organized crime, which destabilizes and hinders peace processes, leading to the investigation of 300 cases, with 19 cases tried before national courts.

B. Strengthening the administration of justice within the Organization

39. The internal system of administration of justice is built to guarantee the observance of the rule of law within the Organization and for its staff members. As at 30 June 2018, the United Nations Dispute Tribunal had issued 1,594 judgments and the United Nations Appeals Tribunal had issued 839.

C. Promotion of the rule of law at the international level

1. Codification, development and promotion of an international legal framework

40. The United Nations continues to facilitate the codification, development and promotion of an international legal framework of norms, standards and mechanisms on a vast array of subjects, including the maintenance of international peace and security, the peaceful settlement of disputes, accountability for international crimes and environmental and human rights protection.

(i) Codification and development of international instruments, norms, standards and rules

41. The Sixth Committee of the General Assembly considered a number of items relating to the codification and development of international law during the seventy-second session of the Assembly, including on the expulsion of aliens, the effects of armed conflicts on treaties and the responsibility of international organizations. In its consideration of the item on the report of the International Law Commission on the work of its sixty-ninth session, as reflected in General Assembly resolution 72/116, the Committee noted the completion of the first reading of the draft articles on crimes against humanity with the adoption of the entire set of draft articles on the topic and took note of the Commission's decision to include the topic "Succession of States in respect of State responsibility" in its programme of work.

42. The International Law Commission held its seventieth session in New York and in Geneva. It had eight substantive topics on its agenda. In support of the work of the Commission, the Secretariat prepared a memorandum on ways and means of making the evidence of customary international law more readily available.

43. With respect to international law of the sea, three additional States became party to the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, bringing the total number of States parties to 89.

44. In its resolution 72/249, the General Assembly decided to convene an Intergovernmental Conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, to consider the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292: Development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction on the elements and to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, with a view to developing the instrument as soon as possible. The Conference will meet for four sessions; the first will be held in September 2018, the second and third in 2019 and the fourth in 2020.

45. At its fifty-first session, in 2018, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) approved a draft convention on international settlement agreements resulting from mediation and submitted the draft to the General Assembly with a recommendation to adopt, on the basis of the draft, a United Nations convention on international settlement agreements resulting from mediation. At the same session, UNCITRAL adopted the UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Mediation and International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation, 2018 (amending the UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Conciliation, 2002), the UNCITRAL legislative guide on key principles of a business registry and the UNCITRAL Model Law on Recognition and Enforcement of Insolvency-related Judgments, together with its guide to enactment.

46. There were more than 40 legislative actions with respect to UNCITRAL texts, including four accessions to the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods, two accessions to the United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts and one ratification of the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Carriage of Goods Wholly or Partly by Sea.

47. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime currently has 189 States parties, and the United Nations is assisting Governments to harmonize national legal frameworks with the Convention and the Protocols thereto, including through a knowledge management portal. There were three ratifications of or accessions to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; two ratifications of or accessions to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; two ratifications of or accessions to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and five ratifications of or accessions to its Optional Protocol; and five ratifications of or accessions to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

(ii) Promotion of international instruments, norms, standards and rules

48. The United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law, established by the General Assembly in 1965, is aimed at contributing towards a better knowledge of international law so as to strengthen international peace and security and promote cooperation among States. The Programme continued its activities by issuing legal publications, by organizing and conducting the International Law Fellowship Programme as well as three regional courses in international law for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific and by adding 42 lectures on diverse topics of international law to the United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law.

2. International and hybrid courts and tribunals and non-judicial accountability mechanisms

(i) International Court of Justice

49. During the period under review, there were a number of significant developments before the International Court of Justice. In its resolution 71/292, the General Assembly requested an advisory opinion from the Court on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. The Assembly posed two distinct questions: (a) on the lawfulness of the completion of the process of decolonization of Mauritius; and (b) on the consequences under international law arising from the continued administration by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland of the Chagos Archipelago. Pursuant to Article 65, paragraph 2, of the Statute of the Court, the Secretariat collected and transmitted to the Court a dossier of documents that are likely to assist with these questions. The Court invited the Member States and the organizations to present their written statements on the questions. The oral hearings are due to take place.

50. With regard to the long-standing border controversy between Guyana and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, after having carefully analysed developments in the good offices processes and concluded that significant progress had not been made towards arriving at the full agreement for the solution of the issues between the two States, the Secretary-General announced on 30 January 2018 that he had chosen the International Court of Justice as the means now to be used for the solution of the controversy pursuant to the Geneva Agreement of 1966.

51. At the same time, the Secretary-General also concluded that Guyana and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela could benefit from the continued good offices of the United Nations through a complementary process established on the basis of the powers of the Secretary-General under the Charter of the United Nations. Following that decision, Guyana filed an application with the Court on 29 March 2018, asking it to confirm the legal validity and binding effect of the arbitral award of 1899.

52. In addition to the two above-mentioned pending cases, there are currently 14 cases on the list of the International Court of Justice. Member States are urged to continue to broaden their recognition of the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court to solve their differences by peaceful means.

(ii) International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and arbitral tribunals and conciliation commissions established pursuant to the United Nations

Convention on the Law of the Sea

53. In September 2017, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea delivered its judgment in the *Dispute Concerning Delimitation of the Maritime Boundary between Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in the Atlantic Ocean (Ghana/Côte d'Ivoire)*. The Tribunal continued to consider the dispute in *The M/V "Norstar" Case (Panama v. Italy)*.

54. Arbitral and conciliation proceedings concerning maritime issues were also conducted during the reporting period. In June 2017, an arbitral tribunal issued a final award in which it ruled on the delimitation of the maritime boundaries between Slovenia and Croatia and determined certain other maritime issues. In May 2018, the Conciliation Commission recorded the agreement between Timor-Leste and Australia regarding their maritime boundary in the Timor Sea. A comprehensive package agreement had been reached between the parties in August 2017, which was later formalized in the maritime boundaries treaty signed at United Nations Headquarters in the presence of the Secretary-General and the Chair of the Conciliation Commission in March 2018.

(iii) International Criminal Court and other international courts and tribunals

55. The United Nations continued to cooperate with the International Criminal Court by providing administrative, legal and logistical support in accordance with the Relationship Agreement. The Organization assisted the Court through the sharing of information and evidence, the provision of transportation and security support for the Court's field operations and the facilitation of interviews and testimonies of United Nations personnel.

56. On 17 March 2018, the Philippines deposited with the Secretary-General its notification of withdrawal from the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which is due to come into effect on 17 March 2019. The withdrawal of Burundi, deposited in 2016, entered into force on 27 October 2017, reducing the number of States parties to the Rome Statute to 123. Panama notified the Secretary-General on 6 December 2017 of its ratification of the amendments to the Rome Statute on the crime of aggression, bringing the total number of States that have ratified the amendments to 35.

57. At the sixteenth session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which was held in New York from 4 to 14 December 2017, States parties decided to activate the Court's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression as of 17 July 2018. The Assembly also adopted a resolution on amendments to article 8 of the Rome Statute, adding the following three war crimes to the jurisdiction of the Court: employing microbial, biological or toxin weapons; employing weapons that injure by fragments undetectable by X-rays; and employing laser weapons specifically designed to cause blindness.

58. During the reporting period, the International Criminal Court, inter alia, issued a warrant for the arrest of Mahmoud Mustafa Busayf Al-Werfalli, who is alleged to have directly committed and to have ordered the commission of murder as a war crime in Libya. Another warrant was issued for the arrest of Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag

Mohamed Ag Mahmoud, allegedly responsible for crimes against humanity. He subsequently surrendered and was transferred to the Court on 31 March 2018. In October 2017, the Prosecutor opened an investigation regarding crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court allegedly committed in Burundi or by nationals of Burundi outside Burundi since 26 April 2015 until 26 October 2017 (date of the entry into effect of the withdrawal of Burundi from the Rome Statute). At the request of the Court, the United Nations provided support in relation to the two situations.

59. In November 2017, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia delivered its judgments on the *Mladić* trial and the *Prlić et al.* appeal, marking the completion of its judicial work. Following a closing ceremony on 21 December 2017 attended by the Secretary-General, the Tribunal formally closed on 31 December 2017, having accounted for all 161 persons who were indicted for genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity. The Tribunal was a pioneer of the contemporary system of international criminal justice and has made remarkable contributions to the consolidation of the culture of accountability.

60. The International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals delivered its first ever appeal judgment at its branch in The Hague, Netherlands, in the *Šešelj* case, in April 2018. The *Stanišić* and *Simatović* trial and appeal proceedings in the *Karadžić* and *Mladić* cases are ongoing. At its branch in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, the Residual Mechanism remains seized of a motion for review of judgment in the *Ngirabatware* case. The Residual Mechanism is monitoring the five ongoing cases referred by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda to the national courts of France and Rwanda. The Office of the Prosecutor continues its efforts to locate and arrest the remaining fugitives. The Security Council has completed its review of the progress of the work of the Residual Mechanism since the conduct of its previous review in December 2015.

61. In June 2017, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia heard closing statements in the second trial involving Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea. The appeal against the dismissal of case 004/01 remains pending, as do the investigations in the other cases. The Special Tribunal for Lebanon continues with the trial in absentia of four persons accused of perpetrating the attack that killed Rafik Hariri and 21 other persons in 2005. The Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone addressed matters related to the detention of persons convicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, applications for conditional early release and requests for assistance from national authorities.

62. Substantial progress was made in 2017 in the provision by the United Nations of technical assistance to the African Union Commission and the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan for the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan to address serious crimes committed in South Sudan since December 2013. The constitutive legal instruments for the Hybrid Court are awaiting signature by the African Union and the Government of South Sudan.

(iv) Other international accountability mechanisms

63. The International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 commenced its work in 2017, as reflected in its first report to the General Assembly, issued in February 2018 (see A/72/764). The Head and the Deputy Head of the Mechanism were appointed in July and November 2017, respectively. Since then, further steps have been taken to establish a functioning office, contribute to the accountability process, engage with stakeholders and other interlocutors and establish outreach capabilities.

64. By its resolution 2379 (2017), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to establish an investigative team, headed by a special adviser, to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable by collecting, preserving and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by ISIL in Iraq. Pursuant to paragraph 4 of the resolution, terms of reference acceptable to the Government of Iraq for the operation of the Investigative Team were submitted to the Council on 9 February 2018 and approved by the Council on 13 February 2018. The Secretary-General is undertaking the steps, measures and arrangements necessary for the speedy establishment and full functioning of the Investigative Team, including the establishment of a trust fund to receive voluntary contributions from Member States, which will supplement the regular budget funding. On 30 May 2018, the Secretary-General appointed the Special Adviser to lead the Investigative Team.

(v) International commissions of inquiry

65. The comprehensive documentation of alleged violations and the preservation of evidence are essential to the pursuit of accountability and the fight against impunity. The Human Rights Council has mandated independent commissions of inquiry, for example, in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, South Sudan and the State of Palestine, and the United Nations has continued to support these commissions. This included an independent, international fact-finding mission to establish the facts and circumstances of human rights violations in Myanmar, in particular in Rakhine State, to which the mission has yet to gain access, and a team of international experts to collect and preserve information and to forward conclusions to the judicial authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo concerning the events in the Kasai region.

III. Coordination and cohesion in United Nations rule of law assistance

A. Improving the coordination and effectiveness of United Nations support

66. The global focal point arrangement has been exemplary in offering a model for coordinated and coherent delivery of rule of law assistance in many challenging settings. It provides system-wide support to host countries through joint assessments and analyses, joint planning processes, the rapid deployment of expertise and joint resource mobilization efforts for country programmes. To date, 51 global focal point assessments have been undertaken in conflict-affected contexts, with justice experts deployed to Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Yemen. The arrangement has supported the development of joint rule of law programmes in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Somalia, Darfur and Kosovo.

67. In Haiti, the global focal point supported the transition from a peacekeeping mission to the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) and transition planning to ensure that the United Nations country team can continue to support national security and justice institutions. In Liberia, the United Nations joint programme contributed to a smooth transition from the peace operation to the country team, including a focus on strengthening coordination across the justice sector.

68. An independent review of the global focal point arrangement was commissioned in December 2017 to examine the progress, achievements and challenges of the

arrangement and to consider its preparedness and capacities to support the sustaining peace agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the review it was found that since its inception in 2012, the arrangement has contributed to more coherent United Nations assistance in relation to the rule of law, leveraged comparative advantages and positioned the United Nations during mission transitions, and reduced duplication and improved efficiencies in the field. The need for a changing global focal point for a changing United Nations was emphasized, with proposals to increase the engagement of senior leadership and partners, to include security sector reform work and to ensure the provision of adequate administrative and financial resources to respond to increasing demands in mission and non-mission settings.

69. In February 2018, the Secretary-General signed the new United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact as an agreed framework between the Secretary-General and the heads of the United Nations entities, the International Criminal Police Organization and the World Customs Organization. The Compact will strengthen United Nations action in counter-terrorism and to overcome system-wide coordination and coherence challenges.

70. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons has continued to make progress in facilitating a holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. The Peacebuilding Fund has contributed significantly to United Nations rule of law planning, and collaboration with the global focal point has been substantive. For example, positive results have been seen in Liberia at the level of political engagement around identified peacebuilding priorities on security sector development and the strengthening of the rule of law.

71. In advancing United Nations efforts on the rule of law in a coordinated and collaborative manner, the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group will continue to bring together partners across the United Nations on a range of key issues that have an impact on peace and security, human rights and development. The Rule of Law Unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, while guiding and aligning the Organization's rule of law assistance to achieve strategic prevention, peace and security and development goals, will continue to engage policymakers and Member States and provide coordination and secretariat services in support of the Group.

B. Proposal on subtopic for the Sixth Committee

72. Member States may benefit from an in-depth discussion on the means to establish a rules-based international legal order to help to resolve intra-State and inter-State conflicts. As requested by the Sixth Committee, the following subtopics are suggested:

(a) The role of international and regional organizations, including bodies of legal experts, in promoting the rule of law;

(b) Enhancing the rule of law by strengthening the cooperation between the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly and the International Law Commission;

(c) Promoting accountability for serious crimes under international law at the domestic level;

(d) Implementation of the rule of law elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sharing of best practices.

IV. Conclusions and observations

73. The United Nations and Member States have made progress in addressing the issues raised in section V of the previous report of the Secretary-General. While the Organization is pursuing further improvements, peace operations are better organized to support the implementation of Security Council mandates on the rule of law, define areas of focus and establish clear benchmarks to evaluate progress. Measures have been adopted to ensure that peace operations are delivering results, including through closer linkages with programmatic entities of the United Nations country team. In all United Nations efforts, the achievement of results on gender equality remains a priority and will entail improved gender analyses, women's participation and predictable funding.

74. Strategic reviews were conducted in eight major peacekeeping operations in 2017/18, including as part of the Secretary-General's peace and security reform agenda, leading to a reorientation of mission priorities from long-term stabilization to protection of civilians and supporting political processes and peace agreements. For example, in South Sudan, the Security Council requested the mission to provide technical assistance and advice on the investigation and prosecution of serious crimes at the national level. In Haiti, MINUJUSTH combines technical expertise, including the good offices of the Secretary-General, with advocacy to create political space for rule of law reforms. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is mandated to support the rule of law and security sector reform in the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement.

75. The Secretary-General has initiated a comprehensive transition strategy for the United Nations to ensure that planned transitions are implemented early and carefully, assess the preparedness of the United Nations for the transition to a non-peacekeeping context and address challenges and risks to the implementation of a successful transition in order to achieve sustainable development. The Secretary-General will continue to use strategic reviews and assessments of transition contexts to adopt a system-wide approach and to chart a rule of law vision beyond the departure of a peace operation, an approach recently taken in the strategic review of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. However, these efforts have not always been sufficient to address the funding gaps faced by the United Nations country team in the transition and post-transition phases of peace operations, which often remain complex and challenging. Member States are strongly encouraged to remain financially and politically engaged in these contexts to help to identify innovative ways of working and partnerships that could help to bridge the projected critical gaps in political and security support to the country after mission drawdown.

76. In relation to sustainable resources, programmatic funding from mission budgets is an added tool for peacekeeping operations to effectively advance the delivery of mandates on the rule of law and to facilitate transitions, often preventing gaps in United Nations delivery as missions draw down. In Haiti, for instance, MINUJUSTH supports, through its programmatic funds, the progressive and clearly benchmarked transition to the United Nations country team and development actors over its projected two-year lifespan. In Mali, programmatic funding has supported a specialized investigations unit, while in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Organization used programmatic funding to reinforce security in priority prisons. Programmatic funding has been used to catalyse additional international assistance in the establishment of the Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic.

77. International treaties are the cornerstone of the global system of harmonizing international relations and should be implemented properly in the struggle against emerging threats to political and economic stability and transnational and

international crime. As the International Court of Justice is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, Member States are encouraged to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court and to make greater use of the Court and other international courts and tribunals to help to settle and avoid the escalation of their disputes.

78. It is worth reiterating the primary obligation of Member States to comprehensively and genuinely investigate and prosecute serious crimes under international law committed within their jurisdiction and to call upon the United Nations and other partners for assistance, as necessary. Although the progress made in a number of situations articulated in the present report is to be welcomed, many others lack credible and efficient accountability processes at the national level. The absence of or delayed justice for victims and their families often prolongs conflicts, generates frustration and retaliation among communities and obstructs national reconciliation. The deaths of too many United Nations peacekeepers in recent years is also saddening. All necessary measures must be taken to ensure that perpetrators of attacks against peacekeepers are brought to justice.

79. There are lessons that can be drawn from the experiences of international accountability mechanisms. Improving efficiency and reducing operational costs remain essential, since finding resources to support accountability mechanisms sustainably remains a serious challenge as the lack of adequate funding puts at risk the orderly conduct of judicial processes. In this regard, the length of proceedings may have a negative impact on funding by Member States over time and should be reduced without compromising the proper administration of justice. It is to be noted, however, that achieving justice for victims and accountability for serious crimes is a long-term process. Although the General Assembly continues to cover some of the shortfalls in voluntary funding for tribunals through subventions, it is worth reiterating that voluntary funding is not appropriate for international justice mechanisms. Member States are encouraged to engage with the Secretariat before intergovernmental organs take decisions on establishing international accountability mechanisms. This would help to ensure that the Secretariat can respond appropriately and that the framework for the establishment of any such mechanism, and the mechanism itself, conform with applicable United Nations standards regulating these matters, which include a policy against such mechanisms sharing evidence for use in criminal proceedings in which capital punishment could be imposed or carried out.

80. In this regard, it is worth reiterating that respect for fundamental human rights in rule of law assistance is an essential part of United Nations support. As emphasized in the yearly supplement of the Secretary-General to the Human Rights Council for 2017 on capital punishment and the implementation of the safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty (A/HRC/36/26), the imposition of the death penalty is increasingly regarded as being incompatible with fundamental tenets of human rights. It is worth reiterating the recommendation that States that continue to impose and implement death sentences establish a moratorium with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

81. The United Nations continued to strengthen and create partnerships as part of its efforts to enhance the coordination and clarity of roles with partners on rule of law support activities. In 2017, for instance, in the Central African Republic, the first joint United Nations-European Union security sector reform support plan was signed and the African Union Commission and the Mine Action Service of the United Nations signed an agreement to collaborate on mine action activities. Considering its expanding membership and capacity, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons has the potential to enhance partnerships with other cooperation mechanisms in the international response to trafficking in persons and continues to consider options to collaborate with key initiatives, such as Alliance 8.7,

the Task Team on Anti-trafficking in Humanitarian Action and the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

82. The efforts of the United Nations in evaluating the impact of its assistance and providing tools and guidance to the United Nations system include *A Practitioner's Toolkit on Women's Access to Justice Programming*, issued in March 2018 to further guide technical assistance on gender-responsive rule of law support; the "Handbook on children recruited and exploited by terrorist and violent extremist groups: the role of the justice system"; the "Resource book on the use of force and firearms in law enforcement" to help security officers to comply with human rights standards; and the "Handbook on anti-corruption measures in prisons". Member States are strongly encouraged to use these tools to improve performance in the justice and security sectors.

83. Finally, it is encouraging that Member States are making incremental but steady progress in the implementation of the rule of law aspects of the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations continued to provide the international community with data sets and supported Member States in Latin America, Asia and Africa with methodological guidance on the measurement of relevant indicators. In Somalia, the United Nations launched a monitoring and evaluation project for Sustainable Development Goal 16 to measure progress of the country in rule of law and human rights-related efforts. The Organization is strengthening national capacities to meet the targets of Goal 16 in Malawi, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Tajikistan, among other countries, by improving the coordination and delivery of justice for all by mobilizing the private sector and civil society to fulfil the promise to leave no one behind.

84. The meeting in 2019 of the high-level political forum on sustainable development will have as its theme "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" and will be held as part of the voluntary review mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda. An increasing number of States are expected to volunteer for these reviews, including on reporting on progress in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16 and other targets related to the rule of law. The General Assembly is urged to continue to provide guidance to the United Nations on supporting Member States in this regard, and Member States are called upon to help each other to achieve the rule of law targets in the 2030 Agenda.

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Plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to the request by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/129 that the Secretary-General report at its seventy-third session on the implementation of that resolution, including the plan of action to integrate volunteering into peace and development policies and programmes.

The unanimous adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) by United Nations Member States in September 2015 fostered increased efforts by stakeholders to engage people to become drivers of their own development. Citizen engagement has become a core component of many national strategies for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and is reflected in the organizational approaches of development partners, including Governments, intergovernmental entities, civil society and the private sector.

In the present report, the Secretary-General has highlighted several priority actions that will enable stakeholders to maximize the impact of voluntary efforts for peace and development under the 2030 Agenda. A shift from ad hoc and isolated volunteer projects to sustainable investment at scale is needed to widen volunteering opportunities and ensure the inclusion of all types of people. Increased practice-sharing and knowledge development, in particular on informal volunteering and volunteering in fragile and low-income contexts, are required.

To accelerate progress under the 2030 Agenda, a plan of action calls for the holding of a global technical meeting in 2020, preceded by regional preparatory meetings in 2019, to appraise and share in a more concrete manner volunteering solutions among development actors, including countries in special situations. As the designated focal point, the United Nations Volunteers programme is working with Member States and partners to provide support in regional and global consultations.

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I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 52/17, the General Assembly proclaimed 2001 the International Year of Volunteers, to acknowledge the valuable contribution of volunteer action in addressing global issues. The United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) was designated as the focal point for implementation and follow-up. In 2002, in its resolution 56/38, the Assembly recognized the valuable contribution of volunteering, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery and other forms of civic participation, and that volunteerism was an important component of any strategy aimed at, inter alia, such areas as poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, disaster prevention and management and social integration and, in particular, overcoming social exclusion and discrimination.

2. In 2015, in his report on integrating volunteering in the next decade (A/70/118 and A/70/118/Corr.1), the Secretary-General responded to General Assembly resolution 67/138 by proposing a plan of action to integrate volunteering into peace and development efforts over the following decade and beyond, with three strategic objectives: (a) bolstering ownership of the development agenda through enhanced civic engagement and widening the enabling environment for citizen action; (b) integrating volunteerism into national and global strategies for the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015; and (c) measuring volunteerism to contribute to a holistic understanding of the engagement of people and of their well-being and to be part of the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. The unanimous adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by Member States later that year, through the adoption of General Assembly 70/1, provided new recognition of the need for "whole-of-society" approaches to development efforts, including the contributions made globally by one billion volunteers. Beyond the vast scale of volunteer contributions, the very nature of volunteerism as a means of participation enjoyed by all types of people means that the potential for volunteering to engage those groups often left furthest behind is immense.

4. In its resolution 70/129, the General Assembly acknowledged both the progress made on volunteerism and the continuing need to better recognize its essential contributions, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-third session. Accordingly, the present report provides an update on the plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda. It is being submitted at a time of profound change, when Member States and the international system are increasingly focused on developing effective responses to the complex and interrelated challenges of conflict, migration and climate change.

5. Inputs into the present report were sought from Member States by means of a note verbale, and surveys were circulated to United Nations entities, civil society, the private sector and academia. One hundred and eighty responses were received, including 31 from Governments. The four national situation analyses received from Member States by May 2018 and all voluntary national reviews conducted in 2016 and 2017 have also informed the report.

II. State of volunteerism

6. In its report on the state of the world's volunteerism in 2018,[1] UNV estimated the global formal and informal volunteer workforce at 109 million full-time

[1] United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV), *2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: The Thread That Binds — Volunteerism and Community Resilience* (Bonn, 2018).

equivalent workers, a number exceeding the workforce of many major global industries. Estimating the number of individuals participating in volunteering is highly challenging but has previously been put at close to one billion people.[2] Globally, 70 per cent of volunteer activity is organized informally between persons. Volunteering occurring formally through organizations and associations has relatively equal participation rates between women and men. Informal volunteering tends to have lower status and is largely carried out by women and girls, who take on more than a 70 per cent share in some regions. Thus, women constitute globally the majority of volunteers, at 57 per cent.[3]

7. Volunteering comprises a wide range of activities from service delivery in communities to participation in crowd-sharing information platforms. In 2018, technology, policy and social norms continue to shape conditions for voluntary action. A notable trend is the simultaneous move towards localization and globalization of volunteering efforts. Social media and improved access to information have catalysed informal volunteerism and self-organization on a range of issues. Where infrastructure is available and accessible, this means that volunteers are not constrained by physical location and can choose to engage digitally or face-to-face. For those on the other side of the digital divide, however, this can represent another barrier to volunteering opportunities.

8. Evidently, opportunities to participate in formal volunteering through organizations depend on a range of factors, including public and private structures. UNV data on volunteer infrastructure showed that 72 countries had introduced, updated or were in the process of drafting policies and legislation specific or relevant to volunteering in the decade to May 2018.[4] Volunteer infrastructure growth is often focused on youth demographics, including national citizen service programmes, and alignment with emerging official development cooperation programmes, including South-South cooperation. National volunteering policy trends demonstrate an increased focus on promotion and recognition. More broadly, an environment favourable to civil rights has a positive impact on both formal and informal volunteering opportunities. Private sector volunteerism also continues to grow, with significant new activity in the global South.

9. Intergovernmental processes continue to integrate volunteering, based on its recognition by Member States in the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (General Assembly resolution 69/283). Nineteen countries highlighted the contributions of volunteers to the Sustainable Development Goals in their voluntary national reviews for 2016–2017. Since 2016, the General Assembly has referred to volunteerism in 12 resolutions. At the same time, three years into the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, implementation mechanisms under the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework are not yet fully realizing the potential for volunteer leadership. Bolder transformation is required to place people meaningfully in the driving seat of development progress, using volunteers to help to tackle entrenched inequalities and social exclusion in order to reach those furthest behind first.

10. While the recognition and celebration of the International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development and other promotional events continue to grow across all regions, public opinion on and support for volunteerism continue to be context-specific. In its report on the state of the world's volunteerism in 2018, UNV

[2] Lester M. Salamon, S. Wojciech Sokolowski and Megan A. Haddock, "Measuring the economic value of volunteer work globally: concepts, estimates, and a roadmap to the future", *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*, vol. 82, Issue 3 (September 2011).

[3] UNV, *2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report*.

[4] UNV, "Global trends in volunteering infrastructure", background paper, 2018.

found that motivations for action through volunteering continued to be associated with local concepts of kinship, solidarity, self-organization and contribution to the common good, all drawing on traditional norms and expressing modern forms of citizenship. In some contexts, however, where it is used merely as a cheap resource by public actors, volunteering can be viewed negatively, in particular among young people struggling with high unemployment and a lack of access to services.[5]

III. Plan of action to integrate volunteering into peace and development policies and programmes for the next decade and beyond

11. Noting the trends of the global state of volunteerism mentioned above, progress under the three objectives of the plan of action since the previous report is reviewed in the present section.

A. Strengthening people's ownership of the development agenda through enhanced civic engagement and enabling environments for citizen action

12. Volunteerism is enhancing the sense of ownership and the engagement of people to support a successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Governments, the United Nations and multisectoral local, national and global partners are creating an environment for all people to provide leadership in their communities and societies, building on the momentum generated by the extensive consultations on the post-2015 development agenda.

13. This is complemented by various national and regional initiatives to increase awareness of the 2030 Agenda and to provide channels for participation through voluntary action, including by specific target groups, such as young people. In Latin America, in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru, Youth for the SDGs engages young volunteers in the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals at the local and national levels. Similarly, in the Asia-Pacific region, 2030 Youth Force network, which has more than 6,000 members, facilitates knowledge exchange in six countries, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported a survey of young people in Viet Nam about the Sustainable Development Goals, measuring their perceptions and awareness of the Goals to better inform policies and strategies, including volunteerism. Mexico launched the cell phone application "Voluntariado Generación 2030" as a way to encourage social participation and reach the most vulnerable people. Sweden, in preparation for the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development, engaged with a youth movement of more than 700,000 young people through their representatives, and the non-governmental organization AISEC and UNV published the "Young person's guide: changing the world",[6] building on the ideas of 500 young leaders across 126 countries. In Africa, Alliance for Accountability Advocates Zambia organized the first national conference to engage young people in processes to monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

14. At the national level, Governments and legislatures facilitate legislation and regulation on volunteerism as a basis for widening civic participation in development processes and as a driving force for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In the decade to May 2018, an estimated 72 countries introduced, updated, amended or

[5] UNV, *2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report*.

[6] UNV and AIESEC, "Young person's guide: changing the world", 15 October 2017.

were in the process of drafting policies, legislation and other measures specific or relevant to volunteering. Highlights include the first nationwide voluntary service ordinance in China in 2017, the law on volunteerism and conditions of service for national volunteers of 2016 in Côte d'Ivoire and a standard for volunteering support in the regions in the Russian Federation in 2017. Since the previous report, new or updated national laws and regulations have also been developed in Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique and Ukraine, among others.

15. With more than 54 per cent of the world's population living in urban areas,[7] perhaps the most notable development since the previous report, and one that is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 11 (make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), is a rise in volunteering arrangements in cities and megacities to bolster economic and social development. Voluntarios por Madrid is a municipal office that organizes, supports and coordinates around 12,000 solution-oriented volunteers. The European Volunteer Centre recognizes and rewards municipalities that have systemic and sustainable approaches to volunteering. The Detroit Service Corps of JPMorgan Chase supports development activities in the city of Detroit, United States of America. The final declaration of the fourth World Forum of Local Economic Development, in Cape Verde, in 2017, described volunteerism as an expression of civic engagement and of the individuals' choice to be involved in their community and leverage its knowledge and resources.

16. National policies are also effective in fostering countrywide volunteering coordination networks. The Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan national service scheme in India is one of the largest in the world, being present in every district of the 29 Indian states and involving around 11 million young people. New national volunteering arrangements since 2016 include Viva Voluntário in Brazil, the National Council for Youth Development in Cambodia, the National Volunteer Service Program in Lebanon and the ASAN service in Azerbaijan. Other examples of Member States with officially designated focal points and volunteering schemes include Australia, China, Colombia, Madagascar, Paraguay, South Africa, Uganda, Ukraine, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

17. Global and regional volunteering networks and federations continue to promote and facilitate volunteerism. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement mobilizes 13 million volunteers annually to respond to crises and to build community resilience. The International Association for National Youth Services is a global network of professionals focusing on national service. The International Forum for Volunteering in Development connects organizations involved in international volunteering. The International Corporate Volunteerism Leadership Council is a global community of corporations collaborating on volunteerism. At the same time, representation from the global South in many international volunteering networks tends to be limited.

18. New volunteering partnerships have developed, with corporate volunteering increasingly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and private sector employee volunteering continuing to expand. The employee volunteering programme of the National Bank of Costa Rica fosters the concept of responsible citizens in communities. Horizon Corporate Volunteer Consultancy in China operates as a hybrid social enterprise. Scotiabank Mexico volunteers engage with education and health programmes for young people. SAP, a German multinational corporation, enables its employees to carry out short-term volunteering assignments in developing economies. The revamped UNV online volunteering service is piloting a bespoke online platform for Samsung Latin America employee volunteers. Other private sector

[7] United Nations, Department for Economic and Social Affairs, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision* (New York, 2018).

members partnering to offer new corporate online volunteering solutions include Amadeus, Medtronic Foundation and Thomson Reuters. Meanwhile, at the global level, IMPACT2030 brings together the private sector and United Nations entities, as well as others, on employee volunteering. Regional and national consortiums of corporate volunteering organizations in East Africa and Brazil are currently assessing methodologies to report against the Sustainable Development Goals.

19. Volunteerism is often the first experience of civic engagement for young people, and educational systems are providing opportunities to children and youth to volunteer, while developing skills and gaining experience. The Talloires Network is a coalition of 379 universities in 77 countries contributing to the global university civic engagement movement. Professors and students from the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais, in Brazil, work with street populations in Minas Gerais. Students and staff of the University of Rwanda founded Global Community Partners to build access to education and support community livelihoods. Students volunteer through the Friends with Iksica project to provide assistance to students with disabilities at the University of Zagreb.

20. Volunteerism can also be a participatory avenue for those otherwise excluded, thus increasing ownership of the development agenda by those traditionally left furthest behind. Efforts to improve accessibility of volunteering by persons with disabilities include those of Argilando, a national Brazilian volunteerism civil society organization. Through its projects in Africa, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) has provided volunteering opportunities for women to engage in conflict-prevention initiatives at the community level. In Viet Nam, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has promoted volunteerism among older persons within communities. Germany, Senegal and the United States also have senior citizen volunteer programmes. A joint European Union-United Nations initiative in Honduras develops mediation capacities and support for indigenous women. United Religions Initiative Europe supports a network of interfaith civil society organizations working for peace, justice and healing, and its volunteers include religious minorities and migrants. In the School of Deaf Education and Applied Studies of the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, in the Philippines, the Deaf Student Community Service engages in activities that foster responsible citizenship and strengthen understanding between the institution and the communities that deaf students serve.

21. Realizing the ambitions and meeting the expectations of the 2030 Agenda are a task that requires the mobilization of extraordinary resources, talents and the goodwill of ordinary people around the world. Informal volunteering between persons involves more than twice the number of people engaged through formal organizations;[8] however, examples of support to volunteers to deliver on their own self-organized priorities continue to be scarce. The Women Peace Huts initiative, launched by UN-Women in Liberia, continues to be involved informally in communities in the resolution of community conflicts and in violence and conflict prevention. The Sindh Agricultural and Forestry Workers Coordinating Organization, a civil society organization based in Pakistan, trains community volunteer activists who promote the inclusion of marginalized people formally and informally, to enhance rural socioeconomic conditions.

22. In the short term, spontaneous and issue-based volunteering has seen a dramatic improvement in access to information. Events-based volunteering has enabled people to play a key role in several major events, including the YouthConnekt Africa Summit in Rwanda, the United Nations Climate Change Conference of 2017 in Germany, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development

[8] UNV, *2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report*.

(Habitat III) of 2016 in Ecuador, and the World Festival of Youth and Students of 2017 in the Russian Federation. However, despite increased awareness of the likelihood of ordinary people wanting to help in times of crisis, evidence suggests that Governments and other stakeholders may still struggle to integrate large numbers of volunteers into disaster response planning effectively.[9] To address that challenge, the Office of the Commissioner for Volunteerism in Cyprus worked with key responders to develop a policy paper on spontaneous volunteer engagement in disasters.

23. Digital technology is creating new opportunities for volunteering, especially micro-volunteering. The Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team volunteers digitally mapped the status of nearly 150,000 homes within days of the record destruction caused by Hurricane Irma in the Caribbean Islands. Their partners, the Netherlands Red Cross and MapAction, used the online map and spatial database to assess infrastructure damage and associated needs. In 2017, AROVIA of Paraguay organized the "#SombrasVoluntarias" campaign and the first national digital march to support a bill on volunteering. The Office of the Commissioner of Volunteerism in Cyprus has worked with the Cyprus Telecommunications Authority to develop a volunteering e-platform. The number of United Nations Online Volunteers increased from 11,000 in 2015 to almost 18,000 in 2017, with the number of assignments increasing to 23,000. The new international volunteering platform of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies allows national societies to leverage the collective skills of the movement globally. The Smithsonian Institution digital volunteers make historical documents and biodiversity data more accessible by transcribing primary source materials.

24. Volunteer-involving organizations play a critical role in bridging individuals' desire to participate with opportunities to contribute to peace and development processes. These organizations are directly responsible for high-quality volunteer recruitment, administration, training, security and recognition. The Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organizations in Slovakia provides accredited training on volunteer management. Unité, a Swiss association for personnel exchange in development cooperation, continuously develops standards and training for personnel exchange cooperation. Actio Catholica Patria offers training on young volunteer coordination to municipalities throughout Lithuania. Increasingly, components of volunteer management are virtual. In China, the volunteer cloud is an integrated volunteer information management system covering 15 provinces and more than 10 million individual volunteers with a simple, accessible mobile phone application. Ruach Tova in Israel operates a volunteer call centre that helps to match individuals with suitable volunteer placements.

25. Certified training to develop technical skills and relevant competencies can affect volunteer motivation, effectiveness and enhance future employability. In 2016–2017, UNV expanded access to learning for all United Nations Volunteers, launching the e-Campus online learning platform. The Armenian Red Cross Society, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), trains young volunteers on gender equality and the prevention of violence. Training for young volunteers provided by Caritas Lebanon includes first aid, fire safety, human rights, leadership and peacebuilding. The volunteers of Banco Galicia in Argentina receive training in the design and evaluation of social projects.

26. Recognition motivates volunteers and promotes wider social acceptance of volunteerism. International Volunteer Day, on 5 December, and other special days

[9] Joshua Whittaker, Blythe McLennan and John Handmer, "A review of informal volunteerism in emergencies and disasters: definition, opportunities and challenges", *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, vol. 13 (September 2015).

raise public awareness of the power of volunteerism. International Volunteer Day global campaigns "Global applause" and "Volunteers act first" were held in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Each year, on International Volunteer Day, the National Volunteer Service Program of Lebanon graduates more than 1,000 young volunteers who have completed a year of service. In Kenya, volunteer-involving organizations, in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, organize the Volunteer of the Year Award. The Government of Georgia, the Association for Democratic Prosperity-Zid of Montenegro, Scotiabank Mexico and the National Itorero Commission of Rwanda also organize volunteer award ceremonies.

27. Other activities fostering the recognition and promotion of volunteers include the declaration of 2018 as the Year of Volunteers by the Government of the Russian Federation, with numerous associated events and initiatives across the country. In Austria, a volunteer passport that documents volunteering contributions is issued by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection. The Japan International Cooperation Agency enables returned volunteers to report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and congressional representatives. GlaxoSmithKline celebrated a global month of volunteering in October 2017, when 5,000 employees around the world contributed 40,000 hours.

28. Ensuring the security and well-being of volunteers is essential for a healthy volunteer workforce. In 2017, at least 30 volunteers of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies lost their lives in service. Most volunteers around the world are uninsured. The insurance scheme backed by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies costs national societies just one Swiss franc per person but are still beyond the reach of some organizations that operate without support. The Citizen Participation Law of Ecuador provides protection for volunteers. Habitat for Humanity Australia, Somos CaPAZes in Colombia, Pravah in India, Volunteer Service Abroad in New Zealand, World Teach in the United States and the Singapore International Foundation provide aspects of security screening, medical and evacuation insurance, travel advisory and emergency management training to all volunteers.

29. In summary, under this first objective, Governments, civil society, the private sector and educational institutions have created a plurality of volunteering opportunities with subregional and municipal volunteer initiatives that are becoming more significant. Expanding the benefits of volunteering through improved digital access, inclusive opportunities and a focus on quality standards and volunteer security and safety require additional attention if volunteerism is to fulfil its potential for engaging those people traditionally left behind. Noting people's wish to self-organize around their own priorities, new ways of supporting and recognizing the huge contribution of informal volunteering are required. Extensive efforts have been made to engage young people through volunteerism. Expanding access for the universal engagement of target groups, including persons with disabilities and indigenous groups, and promoting women's leadership should follow suit.

B. Integrating volunteerism into national and global implementation strategies for the development agenda beyond 2015

30. In his synthesis report on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda (A/69/700), the Secretary-General recognized that volunteerism could be another powerful and cross-cutting means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The role of volunteers in building local ownership of development strategies is highlighted in the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda. Since September 2016, the General Assembly has referred to volunteerism in 12 resolutions, ranging from resolution 70/4

on building a peaceful and better world through sports and the Olympic ideal to resolutions 71/221 on entrepreneurship for sustainable development, 71/165 on inclusive development for persons with disabilities, 71/128 on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development and 71/211 on international cooperation to address and counter the world drug problem.

31. Governments continue to integrate volunteerism into national development strategies and plans. In 2017, in a national capacity assessment of volunteerism, the Government of Ethiopia reviewed formal and informal volunteerism as a basis for establishing volunteer infrastructure aligned with national and local development frameworks. In Senegal, volunteerism is integrated into every ministry's annual action plan. The promotion of volunteerism is an objective in the national social development strategy of Lebanon. Other examples include Ecuador, India, Japan, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa and the Sudan.

32. Mainstreaming volunteering into national policies and schemes has seen a strong focus on young people and inclusion during the reporting period, including in Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cameroon, Georgia, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania. In Burkina Faso, the national volunteerism programme is now recognized as a public interest group and is active in all regions. Young people are engaged in volunteer programmes for pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals in Fiji, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro and Samoa, among others.

33. UNV continues to support United Nations entities through the mobilization of volunteers. In 2017, approximately 6,500 United Nations Volunteers served, with a ratio of 47 per cent women and 83 per cent volunteers from the global South. In 2017, UNV partnered with more than 30 United Nations organizations. To support national development priorities, development partners are embedding volunteerism into their organizational strategies. UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN-Women have included a common chapter on volunteering in their new strategic plans for 2018–2021. The United Nations Development Group (now United Nations Sustainable Development Group) included examples on volunteering in guidance relating to the Sustainable Development Goals.[10] UNFPA has included volunteerism into its human resources strategy for 2018–2021 and has a dedicated interdivisional working group to integrate volunteerism into country programmes. UNICEF launched a youth advocates programme with UNV in 2017 to enable young people to become agents of change within the organization, and has also established a global volunteer office to build a volunteer supporter base of tens of millions of people to champion the cause of children. The Programme for Aviation Volunteers of the International Civil Aviation Organization provides short-term assistance to Member States on civil aviation issues. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has been consistently focusing on volunteers at its statutory meetings, as exemplified by the adoption of resolution 32IC/15/R5 on the safety and security of humanitarian volunteers by the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2015 and of the Volunteer Charter by the General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in 2017.

34. South-South cooperation strategies on volunteerism continue to develop national capacities through taking shared steps towards equitable development. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia and the Ministry of Youth of Malaysia agreed to facilitate the exchange of volunteers working on education and

[10] United Nations Development Group, *Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Reference Guide to United Nations Country Teams — March 2017 Update* (New York, 2016).

drinking water, sanitation and hygiene projects. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the African Union Commission and the Southern African Development Community are developing South-South cooperation volunteer schemes with their members. In 2016 and 2017, the Youth Volunteer Programme of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) coordinated learning exchanges for "future leaders" and a volunteer scheme on disaster risk reduction. In 2016 and 2017, the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation deployed international volunteers to Myanmar and Nepal through a South-South initiative. In 2017, the Thailand International Cooperation Agency and the Beijing Volunteer Service Federation hosted conferences on South-South volunteering.

35. More broadly, international initiatives on volunteering during the reporting period have included the Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation, to support the public-sector capacity to tackle environment, human rights and health issues in partner countries. The Federal Volunteer Service of Germany enables 35,000 people of all ages to volunteer for two years. Twenty member organizations of Unité supported development cooperation exchanges in 58 countries during 2016. The Government of France helped to mobilize more than 3,500 volunteers in 2016. Other international organizations, including the International Cultural Youth Exchange, Caritas Internationalis, Médecins sans frontières and Ronald McDonald House Charities engage volunteers within and between their local branches.

36. In terms of thematic integration, volunteers are contributing to every target of the Sustainable Development Goals. Volunteer engagement enables the expansion of services, fosters greater ownership and participation by traditionally marginalized groups and supports data collection, monitoring and accountability efforts. Volunteerism continues to address the multidimensional challenges of poverty. Across diverse contexts, volunteers are assisting with basic social services and the promotion of well-being and sustainable livelihoods. Volunteers from the National Volunteer Agency of Togo have facilitated access to credit and Village Save and Loan Associations by vulnerable groups and community groups. The Secretariat for Social Development of Mexico involves more than 64,000 volunteers in the community canteen programme. UNFPA Mauritania is establishing a large network of young volunteers to raise awareness on sexual and reproductive health rights. In Pakistan, Sindh Agricultural and Forestry Workers Coordinating Organization is implementing food, shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene projects. UNV and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara support water and sanitation services for livelihood development. Volunteers at ACORD, a pan-African civil society organization, promote giving birth in health facilities among refugees from South Sudan in the Nyumanzi refugee settlement, in northern Uganda.

37. Many regional and national Governments are focusing on formal and informal volunteering to enhance the employability, competencies and leadership skills of young people. In its voluntary national review for 2017, Nigeria reported that several states were operating volunteer corps schemes for unemployed graduates to improve skills and provide access to small business financing.[11] In Azerbaijan, the ASAN service launched a website portal to link young people with experienced persons in public and private entities, with 1,000 volunteers finding employment in government entities and private companies. In Slovakia, the Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organizations has an online tool for skill certification awarded by Matej Bel University. BIT Alliance, an association of software industry companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, provides school students with free opportunities to learn coding skills and explore careers in the technology sector. Cisco Networking Academy

[11] Nigeria, *Implementation of the SDGs. A National Voluntary Review* (2017). Available at www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org.

graduates serving as United Nations Youth Volunteers are supporting information and communications technology innovations in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

38. The 2030 Agenda prioritizes the need to protect the planet for present and future generations. Building on a long history of volunteerism in environmental conservation, volunteers are contributing significantly to environmental protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation and disaster risk reduction and management. The partnership among the Government of Cape Verde, UNV and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa to promote volunteerism for a sustainable and durable environmental management mobilizes young people in support of environmental protection and the fight against desertification. In Sri Lanka, under the purview of the Ministry of Disaster Management, the Disaster Management Centre and the National Disaster Relief Services Centre, UNDP supported the 2017 HackaDev 3.0 initiative, which encouraged volunteers to develop technological solutions for disaster risk reduction. Bulgaria, Cameroon, Estonia, Tajikistan and Trinidad and Tobago also support environmental volunteering.

39. Volunteer initiatives are increasingly focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment. In Ghana, the National Peace Council strengthened the capacity of women and young people to engage in conflict prevention and mediation. Volunteers from Papua New Guinea, the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee in Papua New Guinea, the Omid Foundation in the Islamic Republic of Iran and VANWODS Microfinance in Vanuatu are addressing gender-based violence. Through the Youth-Mullah Gender Volunteer Caravans in Afghanistan, young Afghan men and women spread gender-equality messages. UN-Women, Wikimedia, Empower Women, the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and volunteer champions launched the HERstory project in the Arab States region to highlight the contributions made by women and enhance gender-equality content on Wikipedia. IMPACT2030 worked with the WomenRising2030 initiative of the Business and Sustainable Development Commission to elevate women's leadership, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

40. To support efforts towards greater social inclusion and address the persistent marginalization of groups often left behind, Portugal highlighted in its voluntary national review for 2017 the role of volunteerism among young people in tackling inequalities. The Serbian national project to integrate Roma youth is preparing United Nations Youth Volunteers for public service employment. In the Accessible India Campaign, United Nations Volunteers performed quality assurance checks on audit reports on accessibility for persons with disabilities in 1,600 public buildings across 25 major cities. Tandem, in Belgium, places refugees and asylum-seekers in European civil society organizations as short-term volunteers to build mutual understanding. Volunteers from Global Brigade in Panama work with indigenous populations.

41. Volunteers are promoting justice, protection, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. UNDP is assisting the Government of Malawi with establishing volunteer district peace committees, as enshrined in the National Peace Policy. In Timor-Leste, UNDP also supported a national early warning system in which young volunteers take on an active role in monitoring conflict-related risks. The Youth Movement for Employment and Violence-Free Africa in the Gambia engage volunteers in peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities. In 2017, 2,169 United Nations Volunteers served with peacekeeping and special political missions. Sixty United Nations Volunteers served with the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to support the implementation of the ceasefire agreement. Under the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, United Nations Volunteers are working directly with vulnerable groups to provide them with

information on human rights and child protection. In Kenya, UNHCR is training 100 refugee volunteers to contribute to sustainable solutions through dialogue. Like many national societies, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society provides emergency medical support and psychosocial support through its network of volunteers. In Sri Lanka, volunteer-involving organizations and evaluation partners are developing a reconciliation scorecard and a barometer survey that are an integral component of the country's national reconciliation action plan. To celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights launched a year-long digital volunteering campaign in 2018.[12]

42. Adequate resourcing and funding for volunteerism are critical to sustaining participatory development. In 2016, the Government of Togo enacted important reforms to stabilize the funding of its National Volunteering Agency. In Bangladesh, the Youth Welfare Fund Act of 2016 provides youth organizations with financial support for volunteerism. The Children and Youth Development Fund of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia provides State financial support for volunteering for marginalized groups. The Ministry of Social Affairs of Lebanon has partnered with the World Bank to support two phases of its National Volunteer Service Program through funds and technical assistance. The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France allocates more than €17 million annually to support various forms of volunteerism. In 2016, the Court of Appeal of the Minas Gerais State in Brazil funded a volunteer centre to strengthen the State volunteer network and coordinate the volunteer activities of the Court. The Green Climate Fund funded activities of the World Meteorological Organization and UNV in Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, the Niger and Senegal. Several employee and international volunteering programmes, such as Grupo Financiero Ficohsa in Honduras, Habitat for Humanity and Peace Corps, provide community grants through their volunteers.

43. In 2016–2017, contributions to the Special Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Volunteers amounted to $7.85 million through partnerships with the Governments of Bangladesh, China, Czechia, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Kazakhstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand and Turkey. UNV had full-funding volunteer partnerships with Belgium, China, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, AIESEC International, Cisco Systems and Save the Children. Contributions to the Special Voluntary Fund enable UNV to develop projects that embed the values of volunteerism in the work of Governments and the United Nations. The UNV Online Volunteering service website was revamped in 2016 thanks to financial support from the Government of Germany, enabling the service to be scaled up to reach more volunteers.

44. Volunteerism is a cross-cutting means of implementation relevant to all areas of the Sustainable Development Goals. Accordingly, Governments and their development partners are integrating volunteerism into national strategies and plans, with a major focus on youth engagement. South-South volunteering remains an important channel for building capacities through shared learning and equitable partnerships. Currently, limited needs assessments and analyses are available to support resourcing decisions in sector or geographical plans across diverse contexts. Although volunteering is a cost-effective approach to peace and development, it is not free of cost; predictable and comprehensive investment by Governments and their partners is therefore required to expand volunteering opportunities to all, forming part and parcel of implementation arrangements for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations system should continue to embed volunteerism in

[12] See www.standup4humanrights.org/en/index.html.

strategies, plans and guidance relating to the Sustainable Development Goals. It should also continue to support the engagement of the United Nations Volunteers to bolster youth and female leadership and the representation of countries from the southern hemisphere and strengthen the range of skills available to the United Nations system.

C. Measuring volunteerism to contribute to a holistic understanding of the engagement of people and of their well-being and being part of the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda

45. Given the contributions of volunteerism highlighted in the present and previous reports, there is a continuing need to better measure and research the economic, social and developmental impact of volunteerism in order to guide actions and partnerships aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

46. While two countries recognized the contribution of volunteerism to national development in their 2016 voluntary national reviews of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, they were 17 to do so in 2017.[13] Many more highlighted the role of volunteer or stakeholder engagement in reporting processes. For example, the Government of Jordan organized a meeting between relevant government ministries and volunteer groups as part of the report development process.

47. Volunteers are a recognized stakeholder group at the Economic and Social Council, and volunteer-involving organizations are engaging in global forums, such as the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to increase dialogue on the impact and contribution of volunteers. As part of this work, in 2017, the Volunteer Groups Alliance developed a volunteer statement and advocacy toolkit and coordinated activities across national networks of volunteer-involving organizations as they provided national Governments with volunteerism data for their voluntary national reviews. In 2018, UNV and partners organized side events or interventions on volunteerism and voluntary national reviews at the five regional forums for sustainable development convened by the regional commissions of the United Nations. Volunteerism was also the subject of a side event on realizing demographic dividends for Agenda 2063 of the African Union at the International Conference on African Development held in Kenya in 2016.

48. To date, the recognition of volunteer efforts in national reporting mechanisms has been based on qualitative examples rather than on a systematic analysis of their distinctive contributions under Agenda 2030. Member States report a continued challenge in terms of the availability of statistical data to capture whole-of-society approaches. More comprehensive measurement is required to improve the analysis of the means of implementation and to support strategy and investment decisions. Since the previous report, the national statistical offices of eight countries have reported conducting measurement research. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Kenya found that, in 2016, volunteer work had contributed 3.66 per cent to gross domestic product (GDP). The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics incorporated modules on volunteerism activities in its quarterly labour force surveys for 2016–2017. The national statistical institute of Norway regularly publishes a satellite account on the voluntary sector, showing contributions to GDP and the value of non-salaried work.

[13] In 2016, Estonia and France mentioned volunteers or volunteerism. In 2017, Belgium, Belize, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Denmark, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Italy, Jordan, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Portugal, Qatar, Slovenia and Thailand mentioned volunteers or volunteerism.

49. In 2018, a desk review by the International Labour Organization (ILO) suggested that 52 countries had collected comparable volunteering data since the development of the ILO *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* in 2011, with only Europe, North America and South America well-covered. Through a partnership established in 2017, ILO and UNV are developing tools and guidance for national statistics agencies to regularly measure volunteer work, as defined by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2013. This implies making greater efforts to capture informal volunteering efforts, which comprise 70 per cent of social action globally.[14] The use of national labour surveys, household surveys and time-use studies offers an opportunity to integrate existing and comparable data on citizen action into reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals.

50. Furthermore, to enable better measurement and analysis of whole-of-society approaches to development, there is a need to connect the wealth of citizen-driven "big data" with national official monitoring processes. Data standards, platforms and mechanisms in open and accessible formats can enable volunteers and others to support national and local Governments to track national progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and to respond to needs. Several Member States have plans to establish open-data platforms for Sustainable Development Goal monitoring. At the global level, volunteer-supported data initiatives have included 100 United Nations online volunteers speaking more than 66 languages who carried out data collection and analysis for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for the United Nations e-Government Survey of 2016. The Global Mosquito Alert Consortium platform brings together volunteer mosquito-monitoring initiatives from around the world to track mosquito-borne viruses through distributed networks and cloud computing.

51. Non-State actors have also worked to demonstrate the economic and social value of volunteering. Volunteer-involving groups, such as Samsung, the National Volunteer Service Program of Lebanon, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and GlaxoSmithKline, regularly report volunteer hours and value. For the Singapore International Foundation, the economic value of volunteers is included in project value and aggregated in organizational annual reporting. In 2016, PYXERA Global published a report on the impact of global pro bono programmes on women's empowerment.[15] International Business Machines (IBM) volunteer projects are aligned with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, with service hours tracked globally. The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab undertook a well-being impact assessment of TECHO programmes, in Peru. IMPACT2030 launched a toolbox to measure contributions to the Goals. FK Norway has gathered biennial standardized electronic questionnaires from partners and volunteers since 2005 to inform long-term studies of the impact of volunteerism.

52. Research continues to document the nature of volunteering, including motivation, barriers and best practices. The Volunteering in Conflicts and Emergencies Initiative is a research and innovation project led by the Swedish Red Cross, in partnership with Northumbria University and the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, that focuses on the experiences of local volunteers. Voluntare develops evidence-based studies on the impact of employee volunteering in terms of "good business" and skill acquisition. The Center for Social Development of Washington University has researched productive ageing and senior volunteering.[16]

[14] UNV, *2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report*.

[15] PYXERA Global, "Empowering women through global pro bono 2008–2017", available at www.pyxeraglobal.org.

[16] Nancy Morrow-Howell and others, "Approaches, policies, and practices to support the productive engagement of older adults", *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, vol. 60, No. 3 (2017).

The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies published a working paper on informal volunteering in Singapore.[17]

53. Beyond volunteering stakeholders, a wider range of policy and research actors are starting to integrate measures of volunteerism into their work, to contribute to a more holistic understanding of poverty and well-being. Published since the previous report, *How's Life? 2015* and *How's Life? 2017*, the index on well-being of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development,[18] the *Global Youth Development Index and Report 2016*[19] of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the *First ASEAN Youth Development Index*[20] and the *Human Development Report 2015*[21] all included analyses of volunteering.

54. The exchange of knowledge on volunteerism include the first annual forum of national volunteer agencies of the Economic Community of West African States, held in Burkina Faso in 2017 to foster learning and exchange among national agencies. Service Unites is the annual volunteer conference of Points of Light in the United States, engaging non-profit organization, Government, business and civic leaders. The forum annual conference, hosted by the Korea International Cooperation Agency in 2016, presented research on how transformative partnerships and innovative practices in volunteerism contributed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The tenth anniversary of the Building Bridges Coalition, in 2016, brought together young leaders and multisectoral development partners, including Peace Corps and UNV.

55. The contributions of volunteers to national peace and development must be well-captured to enable a systematic analysis of the means of implementation required to achieve Agenda 2030. Member States must widen volunteering measurement across all contexts and would be well-advised to make better use of existing data from national statistical agencies in their voluntary national reviews and other reports. The ILO *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work*[22] provides concrete guidance for ensuring the quality and comparability of data. Innovations that bring together citizen-driven data and national reporting mechanisms require further attention. Online and on-site volunteers can play a critical role in collecting, analysing and integrating data on all aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals. Research is being conducted to model the social and economic value of volunteering by State and non-State actors. More efforts are required to measure and analyse informal volunteering, in particular in low-income, conflict and other contexts.

IV. Review of the plan of action, conclusions and recommendations

56. The plan of action is a road map to integrate volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda. Through this framework, the United Nations, Governments, civil society, including academia and the private sector, and ordinary citizens can support and leverage the

[17] Danielle Hong, "Exploring informal social and cultural activism in Singapore: a study on local ground-up initiatives", ISEAS Working Paper, No. 2 (2017).

[18] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *How's Life? 2017: Measuring Well-Being* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2017); OECD, *How's Life? 2015: Measuring Well-Being* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2015).

[19] Commonwealth Secretariat, *Global Youth Development Index and Report 2016* (London, 2016).

[20] Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), *First ASEAN Youth Development Index*, 2017.

[21] *Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.III.B.1).

[22] International Labour Organization, *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* (Geneva, 2011).

potential of volunteerism as a tested and effective mechanism that deepens and broadens citizen engagement and sustainable development outcomes.

57. The plan of action secretariat was established by UNV in 2017. UNV and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies co-chaired the first meeting of the plan of action steering committee with participation from the International Forum for Volunteering in Development, IMPACT2030, the International Association for Volunteer Effort and Volunteer Groups Alliance. Partnership and evidence development events were held in China and the Russian Federation, at international conferences hosted by the Association for Research on Non-profit Organizations and Voluntary Action, the International Forum for Volunteering in Development, the International Association for Volunteer Effort and at the 2016 UNV Partnerships Forum.

58. The present report, the first since the adoption of the plan of action and the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, confirms progress towards each objective. It also confirms that people's ownership of the Goals is increasing, as many Governments value the whole-of-society approach. Governments and their development partners have made progress in terms of recognizing voluntary action as an asset for peace and development. At the international, national and local levels, there is an increasing alignment between peace and sustainable development priorities and volunteerism approaches. More Governments, United Nations entities, researchers and private sector and civil society actors are prioritizing research, data collection and knowledge exchange on volunteering.

59. At the same time, several areas for attention are identified throughout the report. Governments, in partnership with United Nations entities, volunteer-involving organizations and other stakeholders, should continue to increase the integration of volunteerism into national strategies, action plans and programming aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The contribution of volunteers should be systematically integrated into Member States' voluntary national reviews and other relevant reporting mechanisms under the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement.

60. Sustained and predictable investment is required from Governments and their development partners to create an enabling environment for volunteering that can help to accelerate and measure progress under the Sustainable Development Goals. Recognizing voluntary action as a development asset requires reflection on the appropriate scale and mechanisms for creating transformative partnerships with citizens in line with national development priorities.

61. To promote and facilitate the inclusion of all peoples and reduce inequalities, Governments, with United Nations entities, volunteer-involving organizations and other stakeholders, should widen opportunities for people's engagement through volunteering, in particular for those groups left furthest behind. As a form of cooperation rooted in social relationships, the potential of volunteerism for fostering the inclusion and empowerment of marginalized groups will not be fully realized without policy coherence and related investments. A greater focus by all actors on understanding, nurturing and investing in informal volunteering is required, owing to its higher prevalence in fragile contexts and higher female participation rate.

62. The protection, security and well-being of volunteers must be of the highest priority. Governments should approve and apply policies that safeguard both the physical and social protection of volunteers and guarantee that adequate medical, disability and death benefits are universally provided.

63. To facilitate knowledge exchange and cooperation, Governments and their development partners should scale up the use of the common measurement indicators

and methodologies provided in the ILO *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work*, most urgently to increase the availability of data on low-income contexts. Innovations on measurement carried out by all stakeholders should draw on this common methodological foundation. Volunteer measurement data have the potential to improve the analysis of the means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals as a basis for investment decisions.

V. Next steps

64. A three-tier approach is reaffirmed as institutional arrangements to implement the plan of action (A/70/118 and A/70/118/Corr.1) in line with existing global review mechanisms on sustainable development. First, technical guidance for the analysis of volunteering at the national level was developed and provided to Member States in 2017 to help to harmonize and understand countries' experiences from diverse contexts. To date, analyses have been completed by Austria, Cyprus, Malta and the Sudan. Member States are encouraged to work with national partners to prepare this analysis to ultimately form part of national reviews of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

65. Second, the data and information generated through the analyses conducted in 2018 will feed into regional synthesis reports on volunteering. The reports will be shared during regional consultations on volunteering in 2019, which the Secretary-General proposes to hold under the auspices of the regional commissions of the United Nations in the context of the regional forums on sustainable development. This approach will ensure alignment with existing regional reviews for the Sustainable Development Goals. It will also provide an opportunity for Member States and partners to discuss evidence and approaches, identify opportunities for addressing knowledge gaps and ensure that national and regional inputs into the high-level political forum on sustainable development take account of volunteer contributions to the 2030 Agenda.

66. The information provided through these national and regional processes will subsequently provide the foundations for a global technical meeting on volunteering in 2020, as the final and third step of this cycle. The Secretary-General recommends that the technical meeting be held back-to-back with the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2020, thereby ensuring a balanced representation of all Member States and their partners, in coordination with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. This global meeting should ultimately provide guidance and options to Governments on maximizing the impact and contribution of volunteerism under the 2030 Agenda.

67. Accordingly, Governments, United Nations entities and other multilateral organizations, civil society, the private sector, academia and volunteer-involving organizations should reaffirm their commitment to these actions and the institutional and resource arrangements. National, regional and global resources to be allocated towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals should systematically integrate mechanisms to support people's engagement, including that of volunteers.

68. Given its mandate for volunteerism for peace and development under the 2030 Agenda, UNV is the appropriate United Nations entity to continue to support the implementation of this plan of action through the plan of action secretariat. To support the convening role of UNV, and in particular to facilitate greater knowledge-sharing from the global South, broader and coordinated investments from all actors would significantly facilitate participatory multi-stakeholder engagement throughout the national, regional and global processes under the plan of action.

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Sustainable development: protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind

Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

Convention on Biological Diversity

Implementation of United Nations environmental conventions

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the following reports submitted by the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

* A/73/150.

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Please recycle

I. Report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention

A. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 72/219 on the protection of the global climate for present and future generations of humankind, invited the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to report, through the Secretary-General, to the Assembly at its seventy-third session, on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. The present report has been prepared in response to that invitation.

B. Outcomes of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the second part of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement

1. Summary

2. The United Nations Climate Change Conference, presided over by the Government of Fiji, was held in Bonn, Germany, from 6 to 17 November 2017 and comprised the following sessions:

(a) Twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention;

(b) Thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol;

(c) Forty-seventh session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation;

(d) Forty-seventh session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice;

(e) Resumed session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement.

3. The Conference enjoyed a high level of participation and was attended by 9,196 government delegates from 194 parties to the Convention, representatives of 1 observer State; 5,543 observers, including representatives from 35 entities of the United Nations Secretariat, 21 specialized agencies and related organizations, 75 intergovernmental organizations and 953 non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and 1,283 media representatives.

4. The Conference delivered significant results across all bodies: the Conference of the Parties adopted 22 decisions, the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol adopted 7 decisions and the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement adopted procedural conclusions. Significant progress was achieved at the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, and announcements were made by Governments, local governments, the private sector and other non-party State actors to accelerate their implementation of climate action.

5. The parties advanced the development of their guidelines for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, which are to be completed at the end of 2018, came together on the individual elements under negotiation to operationalize the Agreement, agreed on the overall structure of the outcome of the twenty-fourth

session of the Conference of the Parties to be held in December later in 2018 in Katowice, Poland, and clarified the plan for the final year of these complex negotiations. The above progress provides a solid foundation for completing the work on the guidelines by the agreed deadline.

6. The parties established a firm basis for ambitious action in the form of an inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue conducted in the spirit of the Pacific tradition of Talanoa, aimed at building empathy and trust that results in better decision-making for the collective good. The Talanoa Dialogue is a mandated process requested by the parties to the 2015 Paris Agreement c, to conduct a dialogue to inform the next round of nationally determined contributions and to respond to the special report on global warming of 1.5°C by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. That report is, to be released in advance of the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties.

7. Significant decisions were adopted to build momentum for the implementation of measures to combat climate change, including action to advance efforts undertaken by local communities and indigenous peoples platform, action on gender issues, and agreements on joint projects to improve efforts in the agriculture sector, as well as decisions on loss and damage associated with climate change impacts and on climate finance, capacity-building and technology.

8. On climate finance, funding announcements, including those by Germany and Italy, ensured that the Adaptation Fund exceeded its 2017 target by over $13 million, bringing the funding total to $93.3 million. On the topic of long-term finance, countries welcomed progress and urged greater efforts to deliver the agreed $100 billion per year by 2020 in support for the efforts of developing countries to take action to combat climate change.

9. The twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties achieved historic breakthroughs on the operationalization of the local communities and indigenous peoples platform, which aims to support the full and equal role of indigenous people in climate action while recognizing the responsibility of Governments to respect the rights of indigenous peoples in those decisions, as well as establishing a gender action plan, which aims to make women a part of all climate change projects and decisions nationally and internationally. A further breakthrough was made to advance efforts on agriculture and food security in the context of climate change.

10. An agreement was also reached on the delivery of commitments under the Convention, including the mobilization of climate finance, and under the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2018 and 2019.

2. High-level segment and events of the presidency of the Conference of the Parties

11. The joint high-level segment of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and part two of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement was opened by the President of the Conference of the Parties, the Prime Minister of Fiji, Frank Bainimarama.

12. The Secretary-General and other dignitaries delivered statements focusing on increasing the ambition and advancing the implementation of actions under the Paris Agreement, and recognizing the need to take decisive steps towards achieving its full implementation.

13. The Secretary-General highlighted the need for countries to accelerate their efforts in a spirit of collaboration, and reiterated the need for leadership from Heads of State and Governments and other stakeholders, and for the engagement of all sectors of society to work together to urgently take decisive climate action.

14. During the high-level segment, 142 statements were delivered, of which 9 were by Heads of State, 4 by Deputy Heads of State, 93 by ministers, 7 by deputy ministers, and 29 by heads of delegation. Statements were also made by representatives of 23 observer constituencies, including indigenous peoples organizations trade unions, women and gender NGOs, youth NGOs, business and industry NGOs, environmental NGOs, research and independent NGOs, faith-based NGOs, local governments, municipal authorities and intergovernmental and regional organizations.

15. Pursuant to its decision 1/CP.20, the Conference of the Parties convened a high-level event on accelerating climate action to: further strengthen high-level engagement on implementation;, announce new or strengthened voluntary efforts, initiatives and coalitions; report on progress made by new or strengthened voluntary efforts, initiatives and coalitions; and engage dignitaries from parties to the Convention, international organizations, international cooperative initiatives and non-party stakeholders.

16. Under the guidance of the presidency of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, five high-level events on the following topics were convened during the Conference: resilience and risk insurance; on United Nations policy coherence and joint delivery to support low-emission and climate resilient development at the national level; health actions for the implementation of the Paris Agreement; integrating human rights into climate action; and long-term strategies to 2050 for prosperity and a safe climate. These events explored each topic in the context of increasing the shared global ambition to combat climate change, in particular, immediate action and collaboration as well as action to implement the Paris Agreement. Participants at these events represented a spectrum of leaders, including Heads of State and Government, ministers, principals of international organizations and innovators and influencers from the private sector and civil society. Through these events, participants highlighted the actions being taken at all levels of society that are contributing to enhanced climate action, and helping national Governments to implement their commitments.

B. Outcomes of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties

17. The following decisions were adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-third session:

(a) 1/CP.23: Fiji Momentum for Implementation;

(b) 2/CP.23: Local communities and indigenous peoples platform;

(c) 3/CP.23: Establishment of a gender action plan;

(d) 4/CP.23: Koronivia joint work on agriculture;

(e) 5/CP.23: Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts;

(f) 6/CP.23: Long-term climate finance;

(g) 7/CP.23: Report of the Standing Committee on Finance;

(h) 8/CP.23: Review of the functions of the Standing Committee on Finance;

(i) 9/CP.23: Report of the Green Climate Fund to the Conference of the Parties and guidance to the Green Climate Fund;

(j) 10/CP.23: Report of the Global Environment Facility to the Conference of the Parties and guidance to the Global Environment Facility;

(k) 11/CP.23: Sixth review of the Financial Mechanism;

(l) 12/CP.23: Process to identify the information to be provided by the parties in accordance with article 9, paragraph 5, of the Paris Agreement;

(m) 13/CP.23: Assessment of the technical examination processes on mitigation and adaptation;

(n) 14/CP.23: Review of the effective implementation of the Climate Technology Centre and Network;

(o) 15/CP.23: Enhancing climate technology development and transfer through the Technology Mechanism;

(p) 16/CP.23: Annual technical progress report of the Paris Committee on Capacity-building for 2017;

(q) 17/CP.23: Fourth review of the implementation of the framework for capacity-building in countries with economies in transition;

(r) 18/CP.23: Scope of the next periodic review of the long-term global goal under the Convention and of overall progress towards achieving it;

(s) 19/CP.23: Training programme for review experts for the technical review of biennial reports and national communications of the parties included in annex I to the Convention;

(t) 20/CP.23: Administrative, financial and institutional matters;

(u) 21/CP.23: Programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019;

(v) 22/CP.23: Dates and venues of future sessions.

4. Outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol

18. The following decisions were adopted by the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol at its thirteenth session:

(a) 1/CMP.13: Report of the Adaptation Fund Board;

(b) 2/CMP.13: Third Review of the Adaptation Fund;

(c) 3/CMP.13: Guidance relating to the clean development mechanism;

(d) 4/CMP.13: Fourth review of the implementation of the framework for capacity-building in countries with economies in transition under the Kyoto Protocol;

(e) 5/CMP.13: Administrative, financial and institutional matters;

(f) 6/CMP.13: Programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019;

(g) 7/CMP.13: Budget for the international transaction log and a methodology for the collection of its fees for the biennium 2018–2019.

5. Outcomes of the second part of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement

19. The report of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement on the second part of its first session can be found in document FCCC/PA/CMA/2017/2.[1]

6. Conclusions and recommendations

20. The General Assembly may wish, inter alia:

(a) To take note of the report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as transmitted by the Secretary-General;

(b) To note the outcomes of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the second part of first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, presided over by the Government of Fiji, and held in Bonn, Germany, from 6 to 17 November 2017;

(c) To urge parties to the Paris Agreement that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible to ensure its universality;

(d) To urge parties to deposit their instruments of acceptance to ensure the prompt entry into force of the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol;

(e) To urge parties to conclude the work programme under the Paris Agreement as soon as possible and to forward their outcomes, at the latest, to the third part of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, to be convened in conjunction with the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Katowice, Poland, in 2018, for its consideration and adoption;

(f) To invite the Executive Secretary to continue to report to it on the work of the Conference of the Parties, Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

II. Report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

A. Introduction

21. In its resolution 72/220, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-third session on the implementation of that resolution. The present report provides an update for the Assembly on the principal activities that have been undertaken in that respect.

[1] Available at: https://unfccc.int/process/conferences/un-climate-change-conference-november-2017/sessions-of-negotiating-bodies/cma-1-2.

B. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/220

1. Outcome of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and its subsidiary bodies

22. The thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, the sixteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the thirteenth session of the Committee on Science and Technology to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification were held in Ordos, China, from 6 to 16 September 2017. The Conference of the Parties adopted 36 decisions and 1 resolution during the session (see ICCD/COP(13)/21/Add.1).

23. The Conference of the Parties held a high-level segment on 11 and 12 September 2017, which included three parallel ministerial high-level round tables and three interactive dialogue sessions, which concluded with the adoption of the Ordos Declaration. The Conference also held an open dialogue session, on the theme "Land and climate", which concluded with the adoption of a declaration of civil society organizations.

24. Significant decisions adopted at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties included, decision 3/COP.13, in which the Conference requested the secretariat, the Global Mechanism and the appropriate bodies of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, including the Science-Policy Interface, within their respective mandates, to contribute to the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development by engaging with and facilitating participation in regional meetings and other activities leading up to the 2018 political forum, as well as by providing inputs to the forum highlighting countries' progress towards the implementation of the Convention and, as appropriate, the achievement of their voluntary land degradation neutrality targets.

25. At its thirteenth session, the Conference also adopted the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, a comprehensive global commitment to achieve land degradation neutrality by restoring the productivity of vast swathes of degraded land, improving the livelihoods of more than 1.3 billion people and reducing the impact of drought on vulnerable populations. The Strategic Framework not only provides guidance to the parties on how to implement the Convention, it also serves as a monitoring tool for the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention in its assessment of the implementation efforts taken by the parties. Under the Strategic Framework, the parties will report on the progress towards five strategic objectives related to the condition of ecosystems and populations, drought, global environmental benefits and the mobilization of financial and non-financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention. The parties will also share experiences on actual implementation efforts related to financial and non-financial resources, policy and planning, and actions on the ground. The progress towards the strategic objectives will be measured through indicators. With a view to decreasing the reporting burden, the parties will receive templates prepopulated with default data on the three biophysical indicators (namely, trends in land cover, trends in land productivity and trends in carbon stocks above and below ground), including associated metrics. Information on those indicators will also be used to inform processes for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, target 15.3.

26. At its thirteenth session, the Conference renewed the mandate of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention as a standing subsidiary body of the Conference (see decision 13/COP.13), including its terms of reference,

operations and schedule of meetings. Furthermore, a four-year reporting frequency for countries to provide information on the strategic objectives and the implementation framework of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework were approved by the Conference in its decision 15/COP.13.

27. Also at its thirteenth session, the Conference mandated, the continued exploration of innovative financing mechanisms and funding options, including for technical assistance in support of the preparation of transformative projects and programmes. It also called for the scaling-up of support to the parties in collaboration with multilateral development banks, international development finance institutions and climate finance institutions, including the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund.

28. In its decision 18/COP.13, the Conference endorsed the scientific conceptual framework for land degradation neutrality, called upon parties pursuing land degradation neutrality to consider the guidance provided by the conceptual framework and requested the Science-Policy Interface to analyse the land degradation neutrality implementation experience based on a case study synthesis.

29. Other decisions, including 28/COP.13, 29/COP.13, 30/COP.13 and 31/COP.13, addressed other core sectoral issues of direct relevance to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, including migration, drought, gender and sand and dust storms.

2. Follow-up to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

Preparations for the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development

30. To prepare for the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development and its review of Sustainable Development Goal 15, the secretariat participated in and contributed to a number of activities.

31. On 13 March 2018, on the margins of the ministerial session of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification assisted the Group of Friends on desertification, land degradation and drought in organizing a high-level event entitled "Empowerment of rural women by addressing land degradation and drought". The key messages that emerged from the event included the fact that while land degradation is a problem that affects all regions, it has a gender component; every year, 12 million hectares of productive land become barren as a result of desertification, land degradation and drought. This impacts the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable, especially women, since agriculture is the most important source of employment for women in rural areas. Areas affected by land degradation, desertification and drought also frequently experience acute water scarcity, which disproportionately affects women and girls, who are often tasked with collecting water for drinking and other family needs.

32. The secretariat also contributed to an expert group meeting on different aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 15, (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss), which was convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and held at Headquarters in New York on 14 and 15 May 2018 in preparation for the 2018 high-level political forum. The session on land and soils assembled a range of experts from academia, civil society and United Nations entities, and was moderated by a representative of the secretariat. The key messages that emerged from the expert group meeting included the message that achieving land degradation neutrality constituted an accelerator to achieve other Sustainable Development Goals and responded to the overall objective of 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development of leaving no one behind. Furthermore, since many Sustainable Development Goals were directly linked to that objective, land degradation neutrality could also serve to integrate action on a range of Goals, targets and indicators. Participants at the meeting also noted that the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund, the first fund of its kind, had been established to prove that sustainable land management could be profitable, and thus had attracted the interest of the private sector and delivered on multiple fronts. Participants also noted that, as of 2018, the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme had a subscription of 120 countries. The establishment of the Target Setting Programme, which was evidence of substantial progress in this area, needed to be operationalized through transformative and large-scale projects so that Member States could achieve land degradation neutrality. Among its main messages, the expert group meeting stressed that the scope and duration of droughts worldwide are increasing as a result of climate change and that, if Sustainable Development Goal 15 is to be achieved, droughts must be aggressively managed and addressed to ensure the preparedness and resilience of affected ecosystems and communities.

3. Target-setting on land degradation neutrality

33. At the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties, it was agreed to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals and related targets into the implementation of the Convention. The parties decided that striving to achieve target 15.3 was a strong vehicle for driving the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (see decision 3/COP.12). In order to enable the Convention to "make a significant contribution to achieving land degradation neutrality", as part of the overall discussion on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Conference invited all parties to "formulate voluntary targets to achieve land degradation neutrality" and to explore options on how to integrate the voluntary land degradation neutrality targets into their national action plans (see decision 3/COP.12). In responding to this request, the Global Mechanism of the Convention launched the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme in October 2015. Through the Programme, the Global Mechanism provided four core support activities: (a) based on the scientific guidance provided by the Science-Policy Interface, the lessons learned from the land degradation neutrality pioneer countries and the feedback received from countries and stakeholders, the Mechanism developed the building blocks for land degradation neutrality target-setting as a practical approach to putting the evolving concept of land degradation neutrality into practice; (b) all countries with default data on the three indicators of the land degradation neutrality monitoring framework, as part of which a number of countries received additional disaggregated data at the watershed level, including high-resolution data for small island States; (c) a set of workshops targeting the national teams leading the land degradation neutrality target-setting were conducted; and (d) the achievements of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme were reported to the parties during the sixteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

34. Through the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme, countries are using land degradation neutrality as a lens to: foster coherence among national policies, actions and commitments; develop transformative projects creating multiple benefits; and tap into increasing financing opportunities, combining public and private, national and international resources, including climate finance. As at July 2018, 118 countries were participating in the Programme, with more than 60 countries having already established their national land degradation neutrality targets.

4. Land Degradation Neutrality Fund

35. Taking into account the recognition that sustainability and the move towards a new paradigm on land management require a new model of private sector engagement, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification spearheaded the creation of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund. The Fund was established as a socially responsible impact fund strongly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 15.3, related to achieving land degradation neutrality. Managed by a private investment manager, the Fund will draw on both public and private resources to support financially viable sustainable land management and land conservation and restoration projects worldwide, by providing long-term financing and applying strict environmental and social standards. Focusing on revenue-generating projects led by the private sector, the Fund will invest in a range of projects, from sustainable agriculture projects targeting small landowners and rural cooperatives to agroforestry projects in rehabilitated lands, which contribute to the promotion of land degradation neutrality and the creation of decent jobs and livelihoods for the most vulnerable. The Fund is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2018.

5. World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

36. The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed every year on 17 June to raise awareness about the status of land resources, in particular at the country level and to mobilize required actions. In 2018, the global observance event for the Day was organized in Quito and was hosted by the Government of Ecuador under the theme "Land has true value — Invest in it." The objective of the event was to create awareness about the need to move away from unsustainable land use and make a difference by investing in the future of land. Approximately 100 local and international participants attended the event, which included five ministers and a vice minister who showcased Ecuador's land degradation neutrality policies and practices at a ministerial round-table.[2]

37. At the time of writing, 80 governmental, intergovernmental and civil society organizations had sent reports on their observance events to the secretariat, in which they described unique activities such as cultural performances by indigenous groups, donations, youth engagement events and a new product launch by a private company.[3]

6. United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification

38. During the period under consideration, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification produced awareness-raising and educational materials focused on emerging issues linked to desertification, land degradation and drought and practical solutions thereto. The Task Force also provided technical expertise in the development of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Gender Action Plan for 2018–2030. The thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties also welcomed the progress in the implementation of the General Assembly resolution on the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification.

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[2] The report of the global observance event is available from the secretariat's website: www.unccd.int/actions/17-june-world-day-combat-desertification/2018wdcd-global-observance-ecuador.

[3] The reports are available from the secretariat's website: www.unccd.int/actions/17-june-world-day-combat-desertification/2018wdcd-events-around-world.

7. Collaboration with the Global Environment Facility

39. The seventh replenishment of the Global Environment Facility concluded at the sixth Assembly held in Da Nang, Viet Nam, on 27 and 28 June 2018. The Assembly replenished financial resources amounting to $4.1 billion with the land degradation focal area receiving a 10 per cent increase in resource allocation. During the deliberations, the panel of ministers, senior government officials and other experts carried out interactive discussions on several themes. Two round tables were of direct relevance to the Convention. At the first round table, participants discussed food, and land use and restoration, while at the second they discussed sustainable drylands.

40. Also during the sixth Assembly, the Global Environment Facility Council approved the new memorandum of understanding with the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, as set out in decision 11/COP.13. The new document supersedes the one in place since 2005. The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Chief Executive Officer and Chair of the Global Environment Facility have been invited to sign the new memorandum on behalf of the governing bodies of the two processes.

8. Partnerships

41. The parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification are strongly committed to effective delivery through partnerships at all levels. With the adoption of the revised 2018–2030 Strategic Framework at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, a number of innovative partnerships are being developed to help drive forward the implementation of the Convention.

42. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification participates in the Group on Earth Observations. In its decision 9/COP.13, the Conference of the Parties invited the Group to assist its contracting parties with the rapid provision and deployment of Earth observation datasets, country support, capacity-building and training, along with tools and platforms so that countries can effectively monitor and report on land degradation neutrality targets and indicator 15.3.1. The Group has since established a community activity. This is expected to become a full-fledged land degradation neutrality initiative approved by the plenary of the Group on Earth Observations in October 2018.[4]

43. While working to support reporting under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification process and target 15.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the secretariat is also working with Conservation International to develop an accessible tool to measure progress towards a land degradation neutral world using indicator 15.3.1.

44. The parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification also committed to improving the quality of life for women, girls, men and boys worldwide with the adoption, at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, of a Gender Action Plan. To help deliver on the plan, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the United Nations Development Programme are pooling assets and exploiting their comparative advantages to achieve gender equality and are providing good stewardship of land resources.

45. Under the framework of the new drought initiative of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, a partnership with the World Meteorological Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Water Partnership is taking

[4] Further details can be found at www.earthobservations.org/activity.php?id=149.

shape to harness synergies and identify opportunities to support national drought management plans development and the evolution of a practical drought mitigation toolbox.

46. The secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification continues to work with a number of donor partners to implement decisions and is expanding its partnership with non-traditional partners, including the private sector, with a focus on supply chain evolution and having local government authorities bring together the urban-rural agenda.

C. Observations and recommendations

47. In 2030, the international community will be brought to account regarding the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In order for that to be accomplished in 12 years, there is an urgent need to identify the targets that can accelerate progress and integrate the planned activities for multiple goals. In that respect, the General Assembly, in its resolutions 71/229 and 72/220, affirmed that achieving land degradation neutrality would act as an accelerator for achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

48. The General Assembly may wish, therefore, to reaffirm that achieving land degradation neutrality constitutes an accelerator to achieve other Sustainable Development Goals and responds to the overall objective of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of leaving no one behind. Many Goals are directly linked to that target; it can therefore also serve as an integrator. The Assembly may wish to direct the organizations of the United Nations system, when designing and implementing their programmes, to take into account the role of land degradation neutrality as an accelerator to achieve other Goals.

49. Furthermore, the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/220, highlighted the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund, a unique public-private partnership, as an innovative funding scheme to finance the 2030 Agenda. This scheme could be replicated while serving as a vehicle for the increased commitment of private capital to land management and restoration. In addition, a large number of member States have adopted their land degradation neutrality target-setting programmes. As the next step towards preparing for transformative projects aimed at achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030, the Assembly may wish to call upon States Members and the rest of the international community to ensure the availability of the required resources, including from multiple sources. Finally, the issue of drought must be addressed in the context of achieving land degradation neutrality, otherwise all efforts in this regard will be in vain. The Assembly may therefore wish to call upon Member States to step up efforts to implement the strategic objective of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification on drought as called for by the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties in its decision 29/COP.13.

III. Report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

A. Introduction

50. In its resolution 72/221, on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its contribution to sustainable development, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly on the implementation of

the resolution at its seventy-third session, including on progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and difficulties encountered in the process of their implementation. The present report is submitted in response to that invitation.

B. Preparations for the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meetings of the Parties to the Protocols of the Convention

51. The fourteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity will be held concurrently in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, from 17 to 29 November 2018. The high-level segment of the meetings will be held on 14 and 15 November 2018. In preparation for the event, the subsidiary bodies of the Conference of the Parties have held meetings as follows.

1. Second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation

52. The second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation was held in Montreal, Canada, from 9 to 13 July 2018. The Subsidiary Body on Implementation was established at the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to replace the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention, with a mandate to undertake four major functions: review progress in implementation; identify strategic actions to enhance implementation; strengthen support for implementation; and improve the efficiency of structures and processes in the operations of the Convention and its Protocols. The Subsidiary Body also serves the two protocols to the Convention, the Nagoya Protocol and the Cartagena Protocol Cartagena Protocol.

53. At the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body, inter alia, considered the following issues: a review of the progress in the implementation of the Convention and of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020; issues relating to different aspects in the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol; mainstreaming of biodiversity to enhance implementation; resource mobilization; financial mechanisms; capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer; cooperation with other conventions, international organizations and initiatives; national reporting, under the Convention and its Protocols; enhancing integration provisions on access and benefit-sharing, biosafety and article 8 (j) of the Convention and its Protocols; preparation for the follow up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020; and engaging the private sector. The Subsidiary Body made recommendations for consideration and decision by the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

2. Twenty-first and twenty-second meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice

54. The twenty-first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice was held in Montreal, Canada, from 11 to 14 December 2017. The Subsidiary Body, inter alia, considered the following issues: scenarios for the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity; sustainable wildlife management; guidance for a sustainable wild meat sector; health and biodiversity; mainstreaming of biodiversity in the sectors of energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing and processing, and health; preparation of the fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook; tools to evaluate the effectiveness of policy instruments for the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020; and new and emerging issues relating to the conservation. The Subsidiary Body made recommendations for consideration and decision by the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

55. The twenty-second meeting of the Subsidiary Body was held in Montreal, Canada, from 2 to 7 July 2018. The Subsidiary Body, inter alia, considered the following issues: potential implications of the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources for the three objectives of the Convention and for the objective of the Nagoya Protocol; risk assessment and risk management of living modified organisms; synthetic biology; updated scientific assessment of progress towards selected Aichi Biodiversity Targets and options to accelerate progress; protected areas and other measures for enhanced conservation and management; scientific and technical matters relevant to marine biodiversity, including ecologically or biologically significant marine areas, addressing anthropogenic underwater noise and marine debris, biodiversity in cold-water areas, marine spatial planning and training initiatives; biodiversity and climate change; ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction; invasive alien species; conservation and sustainable use of pollinators and the second work programme of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The Subsidiary Body made recommendations for consideration and decision by the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

3. Tenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intersessional Working Group on article 8 (j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity

56. At the tenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intersessional Working Group on article 8 (j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity that was held from 13 to 16 December 2017 in Montreal, Canada, a set of recommendations were agreed upon with regard to the contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The recommendations from the meeting will be considered by the Conference of the Parties at its fourteenth meeting. The key recommendations included an agreement on the contribution of traditional knowledge to global biodiversity policy; and finalization of the Rutzolijirisaxik Voluntary Guidelines for the Repatriation of Traditional Knowledge Relevant for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity. This recommendation would facilitate the recovery of traditional knowledge held by museums and botanical gardens relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The issue of how the Voluntary Guidelines on Safeguards in Biodiversity Financing Mechanism could be taken into

account when selecting, designing and implementing biodiversity financing mechanisms was also discussed and will be further considered at the twenty-second meeting of the Subsidiary Body; the finalization of a draft glossary of terms and concepts within the context of article 8 (j), including "traditional knowledge" and "indigenous peoples and local communities community conservation areas"; recognition of the contribution of the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities to the implementation of the Convention as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and future arrangements to further strengthen the role of indigenous peoples and local communities in the implementation of the Convention, including the future of the Working Group and its work programme after 2020.

C. Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity

57. As at 28 June 2018, the Nagoya Protocol had received 107 instruments of ratification, accession, approval or acceptance. Following the entry into force of the Protocol in October 2014, efforts have been focused on further advancing the implementation of the Protocol.

58. A number of intersessional activities have been convened following the decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol at its second meeting. These include the second meeting of the Compliance Committee under the Protocol; an ad hoc technical expert group meeting on digital sequence information on genetic resources; and meetings of the informal advisory committees on capacity-building and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House. The outcomes of these efforts have contributed to the work conducted by the subsidiary bodies and will be made available for the consideration by the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol at its third meeting.

59. In accordance with article 29 of the Protocol, parties were requested to submit an interim national report on the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol 12 months prior to the third meeting of the Parties. Non-parties were also invited to submit relevant information. As at 3 July 2018, 75 parties to the Nagoya Protocol and six non-parties had submitted a report.

60. Moreover, in accordance with article 31 of the Nagoya Protocol, the parties to the Protocol, at their third meeting, will undertake an assessment and review of the effectiveness of the Nagoya Protocol, taking into account information made available through the interim national reports, the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House and other sources of information. This will be the first opportunity to assess the progress in the implementation of the Protocol.

61. Further efforts to support the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol have included improvements made to the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House and a number of capacity-building activities, including the development of e-learning modules and training courses.

D. Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity

62. At the time of writing, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety had received 171 instruments of ratification, accession, approval or acceptance.

63. Preparations for the ninth meeting of the Conference of Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol, include the deliberations of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation and the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, the meetings of the compliance committee, the twelfth meeting of the Liaison Group on Capacity-Building for Biosafety, the eleventh meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House, meetings of the network of laboratories focusing on the detection and identification of living modified organisms on unintentional transboundary movements, and emergency measures as meetings of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on article 26 (socioeconomic considerations).

E. Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

64. The Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety entered into force on 5 March 2018, 90 days after the deposit of the fortieth instrument of acceptance by Japan in December 2017.

65. Adopted on 15 October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan, as a supplementary agreement to the Cartagena Protocol, the Supplementary Protocol is aimed at contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity by providing international rules and procedures in the field of liability and redress relating to living modified organisms. The Supplementary Protocol requires that response measures be taken in the event of damage resulting from living modified organisms or where there is sufficient likelihood that damage will result if timely response measures are not taken. The Supplementary Protocol also includes provisions in relation to civil liability.

66. Article 14, paragraph 1, of the Supplementary Protocol provides that the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol shall serve as the Meeting of the Parties to the Supplementary Protocol, therefore issues relating to the implementation of the Supplementary Protocol will be considered at the ninth Conference of the Parties.

F. Progress made in the implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and difficulties encountered in the process of implementation

67. The recent regional assessment reports by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services found that biodiversity was in decline in all regions of the world. Assessments carried out to prepare for the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, on the basis of information submitted by parties in their national reports, suggest that the majority of the parties have made progress towards the Aichi Targets. Efforts have been made by most parties to translate the Aichi Biodiversity Targets into national commitments, and national actions have been taken to reach the Aichi Targets with support from the Global Environment Fund, the Japan Biodiversity Fund, and other funds and donors. However, these commitments and efforts will need to be significantly scaled up if the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and, more generally, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, are to be met. The information from this analysis is broadly consistent with the information presented in the fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, which concluded that while progress was being made towards the achievement of all targets, progress was not currently sufficient to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and that additional action was required to keep the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 on course. The United Nations Decade on Biological

Diversity has been set in place by the General Assembly to greatly enhance the effort for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity towards 2020. The efforts should be further encouraged through this framework as well.

G. International Day for Biological Diversity

68. The United Nations proclaimed that the International Day for Biological Diversity should be commemorated annually on 22 May as a means of raising awareness about biodiversity. Since 2018 marks the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the theme for the 2018 commemoration of the Day was "Celebrating 25 years of action for biodiversity". The global observance event was organized in Montreal, Canada with the participation of senior officials from the Government of Canada, the province of Quebec, the city of Montreal, representatives of the diplomatic corps and dignitaries from around the world. Speaking on the occasion, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity noted that there was much to celebrate:

> Significant areas of the world are now being conserved as part of protected areas. We have seen enormous improvements in governance models and sustainable use approaches to manage key natural resources. The value of biodiversity for society, our social and economic needs as well as our own health and well-being, are now widely recognized. Furthermore, biodiversity lies at the heart of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

69. The Executive Secretary also noted that despite the progress made, biodiversity has continued to decline, compounding and accelerating other global challenges, and that new incentive models and engagement with relevant actors were required to halt biodiversity loss and safeguard natural assets.

70. In his message for the occasion, the Secretary-General emphasized that the rich variety of life on Earth was essential for the welfare and prosperity of people today and for generations to come. He emphasized that protecting and restoring ecosystems and ensuring access to ecosystem services were necessary for the eradication of extreme poverty and mitigating climate change. He urged Governments, businesses and people everywhere: "to act to protect the nature that sustains us. Our collective future depends on it".

H. Recommendations

71. The General Assembly, at its seventy-third session, may wish, inter alia:

(a) To stress the importance of follow up to and implementation of the outcomes of the 3the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(b) To call upon all parties to scale up efforts to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets;

(c) To invite all parties and relevant United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds, programmes and regional commissions to contribute to the

achievement of the objectives of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011–2020;

(d) To call upon all States that have not yet done so, to ratify or accede to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(e) To call upon all parties to the Convention that have not yet done so, to ratify or accede to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety;

(f) To call upon all parties to the Convention that have not yet done so, to ratify or accede to the Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress;

(g) To call upon all parties to the Convention that have not yet done so, to ratify or accede to Nagoya Protocol.

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Seventy-third session
Item 104 of the provisional agenda*
Review of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits to the General Assembly the report of the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on the activities of the Institute for the period from January 2017 to May 2018 and the proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2018 and 2019.

The Board of Trustees of UNIDIR reviewed the report and approved the programme of work and financial plans at the seventieth session of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, held in New York from 27 to 29 June 2018.

The Board welcomed the new Director and endorsed her strategic vision for UNIDIR. As in previous years, the Board was impressed by the range of projects and activities that UNIDIR had completed in 2017 as well as those under way. It noted with satisfaction the significant role accorded to UNIDIR in the recently released Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General and the commitment of the Secretary-General in the Agenda to strengthening the strategic role of UNIDIR in all disarmament processes and deliberations.

The Board also considered the independent third-party assessment, which outlined a sustainable and stable funding structure and operating model for UNIDIR, and which will be the subject of a separate report of the Secretary-General. The Board supports the recommendations laid out in the assessment and reiterates its conviction of the importance that UNIDIR be given the necessary operating capacity and regular budgetary resources to carry out its mandate in a sustainable, impartial and inclusive manner.

* A/73/150.

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Report of the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on the activities of the Institute for the period from January 2017 to May 2018 and the proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2018 and 2019

Summary

The present report covers the activities and financial status of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). It was prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 39/148 H, in which the Assembly invited the Director of UNIDIR to report annually to it.

Established in 1980, UNIDIR is an autonomous institution within the United Nations that conducts independent research on disarmament and related problems, particularly international security issues. The role of UNIDIR is to support Member States, the United Nations and policy and research communities in identifying and promoting practical measures that contribute to a more sustainable and peaceful world. It carries out that role though four key areas of activity: promoting knowledge, generating ideas, facilitating dialogue and providing advice.

In addition to the wide range of projects and activities described in the report for which UNIDIR receives dedicated funding, UNIDIR provides factual information, policy advice and support to Member States, officeholders and individual delegations participating in disarmament-related processes. In 2018, for example, UNIDIR supported the work of each of the five subsidiary bodies of the Conference on Disarmament, by providing briefings, background papers and materials, and through the participation of experts.

A future priority for UNIDIR will be to support the Agenda for Disarmament of the Secretary-General, the first comprehensive cross-system effort to mainstream and integrate disarmament across the work of the United Nations that will shape its research agenda, activities and resource mobilization efforts. The Agenda identifies UNIDIR as a source of knowledge and practical support for action in specific areas, including but not limited to nuclear risk reduction, space security, armed unmanned aerial vehicles and emerging technology issues. In addition, UNIDIR will seek to broaden the conversation around why disarmament matters in times of tension to prevent crises, how it supports and contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and how it must be led by more diverse stakeholders, including through the participation of young people and the promotion of gender parity.

UNIDIR has a unique contribution to make to multilateral disarmament. The establishment of a stable and sustainable basis for it do so will be an issue for the attention of Member States in the coming months. In 2015, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to present to it at its seventy-third session a report on a sustainable and stable funding structure and operating model for UNIDIR, on the basis of an independent, third-party assessment. UNIDIR welcomes the opportunity to engage with Member States on the basis of the report to put in place the structures and processes for UNIDIR to deliver responsive and effective knowledge, ideas and advice on both current and future disarmament and security issues.

I. Introduction

A. Mandate and objectives

1. Since it was established by the General Assembly in 1980, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) has functioned as an autonomous institution within the framework of the United Nations with the purpose of undertaking independent research on disarmament and related problems, particularly international security issues. The distinct nature of UNIDIR within the United Nations system reflects the importance that Member States ascribe to objective and factual studies and analyses to facilitate negotiated progress on disarmament, promote informed participation by all States in disarmament efforts and stimulate new initiatives for negotiations.

2. Since its creation, notwithstanding the stagnation of multilateral disarmament institutions and its reliance on voluntary funding, UNIDIR has consistently produced quality analysis and ideas on a wide range of disarmament issues. In that time, it has built a significant institutional repository of knowledge for Member States, the arms control and non-proliferation research community and the wider United Nations system to draw on in pursuing dialogue and cooperation to prevent armed conflict and mitigate its impact on people and states. At a time of deteriorating international security — as measured by the greater number and longer duration of conflicts, the number of civilian casualties of violence and conflict and the high global military expenditures — and as the frameworks of and means for sustainable peace and security, including multilateral arms control arrangements, are being called into question, the need for impartial and fact-based knowledge and analyses has never appeared more urgent or more challenging. As the Secretary-General underscored in his Agenda for Disarmament, entitled "Securing Our Common Future",[1] today's reality demands that disarmament and non-proliferation be put at the centre of the work of the United Nations. The role of UNIDIR is to support Member States, the United Nations and the policy and research communities in identifying how that might be achieved and in ways that contribute to a more sustainable and peaceful world. UNIDIR carries out its role through four main areas of activity, described below.

3. **Knowledge**. UNIDIR tracks and produces information on a wide range of issues on the multilateral disarmament agenda, including in the Conference on Disarmament, General Assembly processes and bodies and the treaty bodies. Through its knowledge products, UNIDIR provides factual and substantive information on key issues and processes, including on emerging and often complex disarmament issues, and with a view to enabling all Member States to participate in multilateral discussions. They also provide a vehicle to bring cutting edge research to the attention of intergovernmental processes and actors. The ongoing series of "primers" produced by UNIDIR on the weaponization of increasingly autonomous technologies, initiated just as the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects established a process to explore this issue in 2014, is an example of this knowledge function in action.

4. **Ideas**. UNIDIR undertakes in-depth, original research on a more limited set of current and emerging disarmament issues through dedicated research projects and activities. The purpose of such enquiries is to identify new issues for consideration by the broader disarmament community and to encourage attention, cooperation and progress on them in multilateral forums. In some instances, the focus of the work is to generate new momentum for progress on processes that are in stalemate, by

[1] Available at https://front.un-arm.org/documents/SG+disarmament+agenda_1.pdf.

offering new perspectives or by reframing a long-standing problem. An example of such ideas is the current pioneering work carried out by UNIDIR on nuclear weapons verification through proposals for deferred verification and verifying the absence of nuclear weapons.

5. **Dialogue**. Generating knowledge and ideas is necessary but not sufficient for UNIDIR to implement its mandate successfully. A key component of the work of UNIDIR is to facilitate dialogue between and among disarmament stakeholders, and its autonomous status within the United Nations gives it a potentially unique convening capacity. Well-established forums for discussion, such as the annual Space Security Conference, offer an opportunity to bring together Governments, research bodies, civil society and private sector actors — which play an increasingly important role in outer space — to explore long-standing as well as emerging risks and opportunities for security and stability in outer space. Supporting dialogue will become an even more important part of its work: first, as new technologies bring new, non-State actors into arms control debates; second, as the diversity and capacity of research communities around the world offer new perspectives and expertise that can benefit multilateral negotiations in Geneva and New York; and third, as integration of arms control efforts with key United Nations processes, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is enhanced, the potential for dialogue between disarmament and development, as well as broader peace and security actors, will increase.

6. **Advice**. In support of practical disarmament action at the multilateral and national levels, UNIDIR also provides policy advice on specific arms control issues to a range of different entities upon request. Much of that work has to date been in the field of conventional arms control, where UNIDIR assists national Governments and regional organizations in assessing regulatory and/or capacity gaps or challenges and identifying options to address them. The work UNIDIR performs in supporting countries to establish national policy frameworks for the management of weapons and ammunition in Somalia and West Africa is helping countries in their efforts to build and sustain peace and make progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. UNIDIR is regularly engaged to consult for the Groups of Governmental Experts established by the General Assembly and to provide advice to Security Council Panels of Experts on issues related to arms embargoes.

7. The present report covers the activities and financial status of UNIDIR during the period from January 2017 to May 2018, revenue and expenses for 2017 and the first quarter of 2018 and the proposed programme of work and projections for 2019.

B. Recent developments in multilateral disarmament and implications for UNIDIR

8. Developments during the reporting period have helped to create a new sense of urgency and potential impetus for the reinvigoration of multilateral disarmament processes. This has had implications for UNIDIR both in terms of the scope of its research work and its advisory and dialogue functions. As noted above, on 24 May 2018, the Secretary-General set out a comprehensive road map for disarmament and non-proliferation that included practical measures and recommendations for the institutions and processes of the United Nations disarmament machinery, including UNIDIR. He called for UNIDIR to play a greater strategic role in disarmament processes and deliberations, pointing to its advisory services and the studies it had undertaken at the request of the General Assembly. UNIDIR was also tasked, together with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, to examine ways to better coordinate and

integrate work and expertise among the various disarmament entities of the Organization.

9. UNIDIR was also identified in the Agenda for Disarmament as a source of knowledge and practical support for action in specific disarmament areas, including with regard to nuclear weapon risk reduction measures; transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities and the prevention of an arms race in outer space; the examination of hypersonic missile technologies; the development of standards for the transfer, holding and use of armed unmanned aerial vehicles; better integration of the impact of arms into United Nations assessments, risk analyses and conflict-prevention activities; facilitating the exchange of information and experiences between States on the reviews of new weapons; and studies and dialogue on the implications of new weapons technologies. UNIDIR will also contribute to efforts to strengthen the coherence of United Nations engagement in addressing the impact of explosive weapons in populated areas, coordination on improvised explosive devices and support to country-level efforts to address small arms and light weapons threats. Finally, the Agenda highlighted the work UNIDIR had initiated in 2016 on how gender equality and perspectives might be brought into disarmament institutions and deliberations. In its support for the Agenda, the first comprehensive cross-system effort to mainstream and integrate disarmament across the work of the United Nations will be the priority of UNIDIR and will shape its research agenda, activities and resource mobilization efforts in the coming years.

10. In February 2018, the Conference on Disarmament decided to establish subsidiary bodies to address five specific agenda items and topics of the Conference.[2] UNIDIR was then requested to provide context-setting and substantive briefings, background papers and materials, and to participate in meetings of each of the five groups between May and August 2018, in close coordination with their respective Chairs and the Office for Disarmament Affairs. The reinvigoration of the Conference represents a hopeful, if unanticipated, step forward that UNIDIR has sought to support using its existing resources, in the absence of dedicated funding for support to multilateral disarmament processes and a very limited institutional operating budget.

11. The potential for renewal in multilateral disarmament efforts in 2018 must be nurtured. Although the prospects for tangible progress in the immediate future may be constrained, it is vital that all opportunities to overcome deadlock and bring new energy to efforts to ease current international tensions and advance dialogue be pursued. To play its part in that collective effort, UNIDIR will need to find ways to become more nimble and responsive to support disarmament processes, work with diverse partners, facilitate more sustained dialogue and balance the provision of ongoing knowledge support with advancing new ideas. That in turn will have implications for UNIDIR in terms of its funding structure and operating model, which have been the subject of an independent third-party assessment undertaken at the request of the General Assembly.[3] That review, undertaken in the first quarter of 2018, will provide the basis for the Secretary-General to present a report on the issue to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

[2] See CD/2119, para. 1, available at http://undocs.org/cd/2119.

[3] See General Assembly resolution 70/69, para. 10.

II. Programme of work

A. Performance and status of implementation of activities for the period January 2017 to May 2018

1. Knowledge and advisory support

12. During the reporting period, as part of its mandate to promote informed participation by all States in disarmament efforts and to assist in ongoing intergovernmental negotiations, UNIDIR provided factual information, policy advice and support to the Member States, officeholders and individual delegations that participate in disarmament-related processes. This included, for example, support for individual Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament in 2017 and for the 2018 subsidiary bodies, as well as expert briefings to other bodies, including the 2017 Group of Government Experts on lethal autonomous weapon systems.

13. UNIDIR also served as technical consultant to a range of Groups of Government Experts established by the General Assembly, including that on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security (2016–2017) and the High-level Expert Preparatory Group on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosives (2017–2018). It was selected as a consultant for the 2018 Group of Governmental Experts on nuclear disarmament verification and the 2018 Group of Governmental Experts on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

14. UNIDIR responded to requests for knowledge and advice from the wider United Nations system, for example by giving informal briefings to the Security Council Sanctions Committees and to the Counter-Terrorism Committee on weapons and ammunition management in West and East Africa. While UNIDIR is limited in the support it can provide given the lack of dedicated resources for knowledge and advisory services, it has sought to prioritize requests from regional organizations, such as the provision of expertise to the African Union for its meeting in June 2017 on illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons in Africa, and to the Economic Community of West African States regional meeting for national commissions on small arms and light weapons, held in January 2018.

15. Staff contributed to multilateral capacity-building workshops and activities in different parts of the world. Examples include the provision of support to the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security for national points of contact on small arms; the Hiroshima Round Table of nuclear experts; and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) school in Oberammergau, Germany, on arms control policy.

16. Recognizing the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation education and training, UNIDIR hosted several fellows and interns and offered briefings to numerous visiting scholars, governmental officials and student groups. In addition, it continued its support for the annual nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation training programme of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in Hiroshima, Japan.

2. Research projects and activities

17. UNIDIR undertakes research projects in diverse areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control with a view to providing the international community with data and analysis that can contribute to knowledge and understanding of complex political and technical international security and disarmament issues, stimulate new ideas and approaches to advance

intergovernmental disarmament processes and enhance collaboration with academics and research networks around the world. Most of its financial resources — 82 per cent in 2017 — are earmarked by funders for specific research projects.

18. During the reporting period, UNIDIR undertook 38 projects, held 45 events and issued 40 publications. UNIDIR staff organized events or gave presentations in not only Geneva, but also, among others: Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; Abuja; Addis Ababa; Baghdad; Bangui; Bangkok; Brussels; Doha; Doorn, the Netherlands; Geilenkirchen, Germany; Hiroshima; London; Mogadishu; Monrovia; Nagasaki, Japan; Nairobi; New York; Niamey; Oberammergau; Oslo; Ouagadougou; Phoenix, United States of America; Port of Spain; Pretoria; St. John's, Canada; San Francisco, United States; Singapore; Stockholm; Thun, Switzerland; Tokyo; Vienna; and Washington, D.C.

19. The information presented below is based on activities carried out during the reporting period within four research programmes: weapons of mass destruction; conventional weapons; emerging security issues; and security and society. Detailed project information, publications and other materials are available on the UNIDIR website (www.unidir.org). Projects completed within that period are indicated with an asterisk.

(a) Weapons of mass destruction

20. In recent years, differences over the pace of nuclear disarmament and how to move that pace forwards have dominated multilateral debates on nuclear weapons. A humanitarian focus on the risks and consequences of a nuclear conflict or an accidental detonation of nuclear weapons has drawn international attention to the importance of making progress on nuclear disarmament. The means for doing so, however, are disputed, especially among the parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The adoption in July 2017 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has changed the landscape of the nuclear disarmament discussion.

21. In response, and with a view to identifying areas of common concern and supporting potential consensus among Member States, UNIDIR has increased its research activities related to nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Those activities have ranged from reframing and offering new approaches to verification issues to building bridges between Member States on issues pertaining to nuclear disarmament.

(i) Verifying the absence of nuclear weapons

22. It is universally accepted that robust verification arrangements are essential for the success of nuclear disarmament. The goal of the project has been to develop a model arrangement that enables reliable verification of one of the key elements of disarmament — the removal of nuclear weapons from a State, territory or facility — undertaken as part of the weapons consolidation and subsequent elimination process.

(ii) New approaches to transparency and verification in nuclear security and disarmament

23. In this project, UNIDIR has explored new tools and approaches that can provide transparency and accountability in nuclear disarmament and nuclear security with a focus on fissile materials in the military domain, including materials still in nuclear weapons and their components. The primary goal of the project has been to develop tools that would use recent advances in verification technologies to achieve transparency without intrusiveness in dealing with materials that are sensitive in nature.

*(iii) New approaches to transparency and verification of fissile material stocks**

24. In this project, UNIDIR has developed the concept of deferred verification, using a mechanism that will allow a fissile material treaty to include declarations of existing fissile material stocks covering all categories of materials, including materials in nuclear weapons. The benefit of the approach is that, while making the declarations legally binding and verifiable, it will not require access to classified information related to nuclear weapons or weapon materials.

(iv) Nuclear disarmament, deterrence and the Non-Proliferation Treaty: bridge-building (phases I and II*)*

25. In the first phase of this project, UNIDIR examined ways in which nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States might cooperatively move forward towards a world without nuclear weapons. In phase II, UNIDIR produced further research on ways to build bridges with a view to resuming dialogue on nuclear disarmament. The findings were discussed at a side-event of the Non-Proliferation Treaty preparatory meeting, held in Vienna in May 2017, and on the margins of the Non-Proliferation Treaty preparatory meeting, held in Geneva in 2018.

*(v) Nuts and bolts of the ban**

26. In 2017, negotiations commenced within the United Nations on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. The project examined substantive issues within the negotiations with a view to identifying potential solution pathways, addressing demand from a wide range of small and medium-sized Member States involved in the process.

*(vi) Nuclear weapons in Europe: stepping stones for restrictions and reductions**

27. While it is difficult to imagine a scenario in which "non-strategic" or "tactical" nuclear weapons would be deliberately used in a conflict in Europe, the presence of such weapons poses potential risks of miscalculation, inadvertent escalation or accidental use at a time of crisis. The project involved developing a "zero deployed non-strategic weapons" proposal to ensure that all such weapons would remain non-deployed during times of peace, codifying current practices into a legally binding, verifiable arrangement. It also involved a workshop to explore that proposal with Member States.

*(vii) Understanding nuclear weapon risks**

28. This project aimed to deepen the understanding in policy of the nuclear risk through focused research and engagement, both to detail the risk "picture" and to communicate the findings to the disarmament community. A risk focus might be one in which a wide range of actors — including nuclear-armed States and non-nuclear-armed States — find common ground on nuclear weapons-related issues. The project included commissioned papers and meetings devoted to the theme organized in collaboration with relevant institutions. The project report was presented in Geneva in April 2017.

(b) Conventional weapons

29. The illicit proliferation, excessive accumulation and misuse of conventional arms and ammunition pose a persistent problem for peace and security. In many cases, diversion is a consequence of inadequately controlled transfers, unauthorized retransfer or leakages and thefts from poorly secured stockpiles. In addition, fragile

or conflict-affected States are often disproportionately burdened by the illicit flow and availability of arms and ammunition.

30. In response to those challenges, UNIDIR aims to shape policy discussions, build capacity and identify solutions on the ground and at the multilateral level. Programme work addresses four themes: (a) managing weapons and ammunition in fragile and conflict-affected settings; (b) tackling diversion in global arms transfers; (c) addressing explosive threats; and (d) supporting the implementation of global instruments and guidelines.

(i) Assessing the role of arms control in managing conflict (phases I and II)*

31. Phase I of the project comprised three inter-connected components: a comprehensive study establishing baselines of national stakeholders and processes to govern arms and ammunition in conformity with international and regional norms and standards; a study focusing on the applicability of conventional arms control in Security Council arms embargoes; and a series of three expert meetings to identify concrete options for policymakers and practitioners to effectively operationalize weapons and ammunition management processes in line with existing standards and guidelines.

32. In phase II, UNIDIR has established a baseline of the institutional capacity of select West African States to govern weapons and ammunition in line with relevant standards and guidelines. UNIDIR will produce a guidance document that supports States, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to operationalize ammunition management in high-risk, low-capacity environments. Finally, UNIDIR will conduct stakeholder consultations to identify options and opportunities to increase understanding on the applicability of conventional arms control in supporting the implementation and monitoring of sanctions regimes.

(ii) Weapons and ammunition management in Somalia (phases II and III)*

33. Since the project began in 2014, UNIDIR has held a series of national consultative meetings in Mogadishu to support the Federal Government of Somalia in establishing national policies for the import, initial storage, marking recordkeeping and distribution of arms in line with relevant Security Council resolution obligations. The meetings have played a crucial role in supporting the Government and its international partners.

34. Building on the outcomes of the first two phases of the project, the objective of phase III is to support the Federal Government and United Nations partners in their efforts to establish accountable and transparent weapons and ammunition management policies and plans and to help monitor and assess — through the identification of benchmarks — progress in such management for the period 2017–2020.

(iii) Preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons: options to effectively implement Security Council resolution 2370 (2017)

35. In its resolution 2370 (2017), the Security Council called upon all States to eliminate the supply of weapons to those involved in terrorist acts. The aims of the project is to increase understanding among States and relevant stakeholders of the threats and risks relevant to the resolution and to identify options for its effective implementation. In October 2018, UNIDIR will bring together actors from various sectors to conduct stakeholder mapping, identify potential gaps and opportunities within and beyond existing frameworks and initiatives and explore concrete ways to support the operationalization of the resolution.

(iv) Tackling diversion (phases II and III)*

36. Phase II had a regional focus and principally involved States in the global South that were not part of export control regimes, the European Union or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The key objectives of the project were to gain a deeper understanding of potential export control procedures, approaches and practices, to increase awareness and dialogue between stakeholders and to understand the practical steps States could take to further facilitate a regional and global dialogue to strengthen control systems for end uses and end users. The project contributed to informing the discussions on preventing diversion in arms transfers under the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the Arms Trade Treaty.

37. Phase III focuses on the roles and responsibilities of parties where non-governmental entities are part of the transfer chain. In July 2018, UNIDIR was to hold an informal consultative meeting with the private sector to consider the roles and responsibilities of all parties to prevent diversion. The findings of the project will help to further develop practical solutions to strengthen the control of end uses and end users in tackling diversion in conventional arms transfers.

*(v) Examining the roles, responsibilities and contributions of private-sector industry actors in stemming the flow of improvised explosive devices and related materials**

38. Given the unique challenges posed by improvised explosive devices, in particular their non-traditional means of production, engaging private-sector stakeholders is an essential component of a comprehensive, multilateral response. In 2017, UNIDIR convened States and private-sector actors to discuss the private sector's roles and responsibilities in stemming the flow of such devices and related materials. Participants considered regulatory frameworks, physical security considerations, information-sharing processes, awareness-raising and sensitization activities and good practices. A meeting report was disseminated widely in 2017.

(vi) Informing the basis for convening a group of governmental experts in 2020 on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus

39. This project supports the substantive preparations for convening a group of governmental experts in 2020 on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.[4] In 2018, UNIDIR will organize a thematic seminar in Geneva, bringing together policymakers and practitioners from States, international and regional organizations, expert NGOs and the private sector. UNIDIR will produce a report reflecting the key findings.

(vii) International Tracing Instrument and the way forward: examining possible options to support the operationalization of the Instrument

40. This project aims to identify concrete options to support the operationalization of the International Tracing Instrument. In February 2018, UNIDIR convened an informal expert meeting in Geneva to explore options and approaches to strengthen the operational framework of the Instrument, including the identification of measures to enable effective tracing operations. The meeting included experts from States, specialized organizations and NGOs. The findings will be disseminated in June 2018 in a report and at an event at the Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress

[4] See General Assembly resolution 72/55, para. 16.

Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

*(viii) Exploring synergies in reporting under multilateral conventional arms treaties and instruments**

41. This project identified options to facilitate and strengthen reporting by States in the area of conventional arms. It included mapping the reporting obligations and commitments for select multilateral treaties and instruments and highlighted the areas of convergence. It also identified challenges and opportunities for strengthening reporting by States. In December 2017, UNIDIR, in cooperation with the Stimson Center, convened an informal expert meeting on the topic in order to inform a practical handbook to facilitate State reporting. The key findings from the project were presented in March 2018 on the margins of the preparatory committee meeting of the Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

*(ix) Arms transfer dialogue**

42. This project, implemented in partnership with the Small Arms Survey, established a Geneva-based forum to explore the options and approaches for supporting multilateral processes on conventional arms control. It also provided a venue for discussing synergies between international instruments regulating arms transfers and addressing the illicit arms trade. After each event, a meeting summary was produced (see www.armstransfersdialogue.org).

(x) International small arms and ammunition guidance platform (phase II)*

43. In phase II of this project, a software tool was developed to assist practitioners in conducting field-level storage assessments. A series of informal consultative meetings were held on designing a national framework for managing the full life cycle of arms and ammunition in conflict-affected settings, and a study was initiated to examine the possible approaches to strengthening arms and ammunition management in conflicted-affected settings. A series of national assessment workshops were also organized to support the efforts of States to review and/or establish baselines on the implementation of small arms control frameworks in line with international guidelines.

(c) Emerging security issues

44. Advances in science and technology have brought about new weapons, means and methods of warfare, raising challenges that cut across traditional legal, normative, operational and national boundaries. Through its emerging security issues programme, UNIDIR provides expertise and support to advance nascent and ongoing policy processes in several areas.

45. The activities of UNIDIR concerning emerging security issues focus on two objectives: to support the creation or strengthening of normative frameworks on science and technology issues in the absence of agreement on negotiated or regulatory responses; and to build the capacity of States to participate in informed policy discussions by framing complex, technical or specialized issues in an accessible way. The emerging security issues portfolio currently addresses three substantive areas: (a) artificial intelligence and the weaponization of increasingly autonomous technologies; (b) cyberstability; and (c) security in outer space.

(ii) *Artificial intelligence and the weaponization of increasingly autonomous technologies*

46. Building on its work since 2013, the activities of UNIDIR in 2017 focused on supporting the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Group of Government Experts on lethal autonomous weapon systems. First, it developed a primer to examine the concerns, characteristics and definitions. Second, it issued a report on the topic of cybervulnerabilities in increasingly autonomous weapon systems. Third, it developed a "tech-gaming" scenario-based exercise for States to consider how small technological developments could affect the legality, acceptability and utility of increasingly autonomous systems.

47. Activities in 2018 have had two objectives: first, to encourage greater participation by scientists and technologists in international discussions on autonomous weapon systems through focused outreach to those communities by way of presentations, articles and small, cross-disciplinary meetings; and second, to support discussions on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and beyond through primers for policymakers on themes such as artificial intelligence, machine learning in adversarial environments, and algorithmic bias.

(iii) *Second international cybersecurity issues expert workshop series*

48. Building on the success of the 2016 series, in 2017 UNIDIR and the Center for Strategic and International Studies launched a second series with a focus on regional concerns. The expert workshops bring together participants from Governments, the private sector, NGOs and the academic community to promote common understandings on key issues; and to focus on concrete ways to operationalize the recommendations contained in the 2010, 2013 and 2015 reports of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security.[5] The first workshop was held in Singapore in September 2017 and a second workshop was held in February 2018 at the headquarters of the Organization of American States. The final workshop will be held in the fourth quarter of 2018, and will focus on building synergies between regional organizations.

(iii) *Cyberstability conference series*

49. This annual conference provides a forum for representatives of Governments, international and regional organizations as well as civil society to discuss issues pertaining to the international security dimension of information and communications technology (ICT). The 2017 conference, entitled "ICT in the context of international peace and security: current conditions and future approaches" was held on 11 October in New York and provided an opportunity to discuss possible ways forward following the inability of the Group of Governmental Experts to reach a consensus in their 2017 meeting. The next conference will be held in Geneva in September 2018 and will focus on the roles and responsibilities of States, regional organizations and the private sector in creating an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment.

(iv) *Updated, interactive digital edition of the 2013 cyberindex*

50. The objectives of this project are to contribute to improving the capacity of policy actors working in the cyber domain through the development of a digital resource that provides policymakers with timely, policy-relevant information. The tool will be completed by the end of 2018.

[5] A/65/201, A/68/98 and A/70/174.

(v) Geneva dialogue on responsible State behaviour in cyberspace

51. This project, established by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in April 2018, aims to map the roles and responsibilities of States, private companies and other key actors in contributing to greater security and stability in cyberspace, identify good practices and possible gaps in existing efforts, and put forward recommendations for overcoming such gaps. UNIDIR leads the project pillar on the responsible behaviour of States.

(vi) Space dossier

52. In 2017, UNIDIR launched a new series of short reports on outer space security. Its "space dossier" contains specific ideas for the progressive development of space security norms. The first report, on strategic stability in outer space, was published in 2017 and a second, on the development of anti-satellite technology testing norms, was issued in May 2018. Two further reports will be produced in 2018.

(vii) Space security conference series

53. This is an annual event where UNIDIR seeks to identify concrete areas on which the international community can move forward with discussions on space arms control and de-escalation. The 2017 Conference was held in April 2017 on the theme "The Outer Space Treaty's 50th Anniversary: Reviewing the Regime". The 2018 Conference, entitled "Space Security: The Next Chapter", was held on 7 and 8 May 2018. It considered the existing framework for space governance to examine which aspects were still relevant to the emerging order in outer space, and which elements could be updated.

(d) Security and society

54. UNIDIR focuses on cross-cutting, multidisciplinary approaches to security issues that have wider societal ramifications in such areas as health, development, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and human rights. A crucial component of that research programme is building networks of stakeholders beyond the traditional security and arms control community.

Increasing transparency, oversight and accountability of unmanned aerial vehicles (phases I and II)*

55. In 2016, UNIDIR started work to facilitate multilateral dialogue on armed unmanned aerial vehicles with the aim of increasing transparency, oversight and accountability of those systems. The resulting study suggested a variety of useful policy responses were realistically available to the international community, even in the current political landscape. The objective of the second phase of the project is to engage States in structured dialogue based on the study, in order to build momentum and support for multilateral responses that are inclusive and weigh the variety of interests and concerns about armed unmanned aerial vehicles. As part of the project, there will be three topical research briefs, and workshops and an event will be held in New York in October 2018.

3. Resources and expenditure for 2017 and 2018

56. UNIDIR continues to be funded through a mixture of voluntary contributions and a subvention from the United Nations regular budget towards meeting the costs

of the Director and staff.* Revenue in 2017 was $3,180,000, and total expenditure was $2,310,000 (see annex I, table 1), with a total of 21 donors (see annex I, table 2).

57. Projected revenue and expenses for 2018 are shown in annex II, while actual revenue and expenses for the first quarter of 2018 are shown in annex I, table 1. As noted in paragraph 17 above, most voluntary contributions are earmarked for specific projects. Projects and activities receive funding on a rolling basis throughout the year. Thus, budgetary projections are of an indicative nature.

58. The subvention currently covers the cost of the Director and, in 2017, constituted 9 per cent of the total revenue for UNIDIR. In the past, the Secretary-General, the Board of Trustees of UNIDIR and the General Assembly have made many recommendations about the need to increase the subvention to ensure the continued functioning and independence of UNIDIR. In 2015, Member States expressed concern over the unsustainable financing situation of the institutional operations budget and, as noted previously, requested the Secretary-General to present a report on the issue to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, on the basis of an independent third-party assessment of a sustainable and stable funding structure and operating model for UNIDIR.

B. Proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2019

59. Recent advances, as well as the abovementioned Agenda for Disarmament, offer the potential for renewal both of and within multilateral disarmament processes. Through its 2019 programme of work, UNIDIR will support the roll-out and implementation of the Agenda, in particular the areas where it has been specifically tasked to contribute knowledge and ideas, provide advice to specific initiatives and processes and convene dialogue. UNIDIR will seek to broaden the conversation around why disarmament matters in times of tension to prevent crises, how it supports and contributes to the 2030 Agenda and how it must be led by more diverse stakeholders, including through the participation of young people and the promotion of gender parity. At the same time, it will also continue to support intergovernmental processes in Geneva and, as appropriate, New York, and provide a wide range of knowledge and advisory services on request and on ad hoc bases.

60. The efforts of UNIDIR to mobilize its resources will be oriented accordingly. This will require renewed attention on funding for institutional activities, such as dialogue facilitation, support to bodies of the Conference on Disarmament and outreach outside of Geneva and New York. This will be a significant challenge for UNIDIR, which relies, to date, on short-term, earmarked, project-specific funds. Given that UNIDIR projects do not necessarily follow the calendar year, a number of them will continue into 2019 while the rest of the 2019 programme of work will depend on successful resource mobilization.

61. The financial expenditure to support the 2019 programme of work is conservatively projected at $2,771,000, as shown in annex III. The projected institutional operations budget for 2019 is contained in annex IV. Projected revenue and expenses are based on an assessment of the desired accomplishments of UNIDIR for the year and historical trends in funding.

* According to UNIDIR's Statute (Art VII) the actual amount of the subvention "may be less than, but shall not exceed, an amount equivalent to one half of the assured income of the Institute from voluntary sources".

III. Communications and outreach

62. Communications and outreach are essential to enable UNIDIR to fulfil its mandate, transmit its research and findings to a diverse global community and contribute meaningfully to disarmament and international security processes at the international, regional and national levels. Over the past two years, encouraged by its Board of Trustees, UNIDIR has sought to increase its communication efforts via a monthly update email, a greater social media presence and experimentation with new tools, such as video interviews with experts.

63. Those efforts, however, are far from sufficient. UNIDIR has not had a dedicated communications capacity since the late 1990s, and successive cost-cutting exercises have further reduced its visibility and outreach efforts. The recent third-party assessment noted above highlighted the need for increased communications and visibility efforts to disseminate findings, demonstrate impact and underpin a resource mobilization strategy.

64. The stakeholders interviewed as part of that assessment confirmed that the lack of visibility of UNIDIR outside Geneva was a significant obstacle to increasing its impact. In response, the Director has committed to increasing its communication capacity immediately (see sect. IV below) and to prioritize engagement and outreach, particularly outside countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in order to build networks with a broader set of stakeholders, raise the profile and visibility of the research of UNIDIR and encourage more diversity in its activities.

IV. Staffing and operating model

65. At the end of 2017, the staff of UNIDIR comprised the Director, the Deputy Director, the Chief of Research, the Budget and Finance Officer and a team assistant. Staff are responsible for the following: strategic planning; resource mobilization; project development, oversight and evaluation; representational functions; financial and donor reporting; communications; and administrative and logistical functions.

66. UNIDIR engages specific expertise for each specific project, as either resident or non-resident researchers. In addition, the Director, the Deputy Director and the Chief of Research carry substantive research portfolios. Researchers are recruited according to United Nations consultancy arrangements[7] and therefore do not have authorization to supervise staff or undertake administrative tasks requiring access to Umoja.

67. As noted above, UNIDIR recognizes that communications and outreach requires specialized, dedicated expertise and therefore plans to recruit a public information officer at the P-4 level who will report to the Director to help build its online and social media presence and to coordinate public information campaigns and activities. Moreover, in order to ensure compliance with funding agreements and support the administrative requirements of research staff as its activity portfolio grows, UNIDIR also plans to recruit an associate administrative officer at the P-2 level.

V. Conclusion

68. Developments over the course of the reporting period offer some potential for new momentum in multilateral disarmament. Increased attention by policymakers and

[7] ST/AI/2013/4

expert communities, including the private sector on the implications of new technologies, as well as vibrant civil society engagement on issues of conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction have opened new opportunities for dialogue and practical action. The Agenda on Disarmament articulates the diversity of today's disarmament challenges, the risks of inaction and the urgency for a reinvigorated multilateral dialogue and action.

69. In that context, a stable, responsive and effective UNIDIR is more necessary than ever. Its mandate and unique status within the United Nations disarmament machinery give it the potential to contribute knowledge and ideas, facilitate dialogue and, where requested, provide policy advice that can contribute to building momentum and supporting the participation of all Member States on disarmament. UNIDIR, as the present report illustrates, has demonstrated its ability to provide specialized expertise and offer practical solutions in a broad range of disarmament issues. If UNIDIR is to contribute fully to taking forward the Agenda on Disarmament and support tangible progress towards a safer and more sustainable world, it will need the capacity and agility to respond to new initiatives and developments, draw on diverse subject and geographical expertise and facilitate dialogue and engagement with more — and more diverse — stakeholders on critical disarmament issues.

70. Against that backdrop, the request of the General Assembly for the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventy-third session on a sustainable and stable funding structure and operating model for UNIDIR offers a significant opportunity for Member States to consider how such capability might be realized. It is a moment for reflection but also for action to overcome long-standing obstacles, generate ideas and dialogue and make tangible progress in multilateral disarmament. UNIDIR has a modest but unique contribution to make to that ambitious agenda: the establishment of a stable and sustainable basis for it do so could be an important step towards its realization.

Annex I

Table 1
Actual revenue and expenses for 2017 and first quarter of 2018[a]

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Description	*2017*	*First quarter 2018*
Revenue		
Voluntary contributions	2 765	419
Investment revenue	58	18
Other transfers and allocations	333	421
Other revenue	24[b]	1
Total revenue	**3 180**	**859**
Expenses		
Direct expenditure		
Employee salaries, allowances and benefits	1 144[c]	301[d]
Non-employee compensation and allowances	566[e]	148[f]
Grants and other transfers	80	0
Supplies and consumables	2	0
Travel	180	46
Other operating expenses	225	51
Programme support and prorated expenses	106	33
Other expenses	7	1
Total expenses	**2 310**	**580**
Surplus/(deficit) for the year[g]	**870**	**279**

[a] Figures from UNIDIR statement of financial performance for the year 2017. The statement was prepared in accordance with IPSAS; contributions are accounted for in the year when the pledge is signed, for present as well as for future years. For further information on IPSAS, as well as the basis for the preparation of UNIDIR financial statements, please see A/71/162, annex I, and A/72/154, annex I.

[b] Includes net foreign exchange gain.

[c] Institutional staff costs in 2017 amount to $1,010,781.

[d] Institutional staff costs for the first quarter of 2018 amount to $272,650.

[e] $74,803 corresponds to travels of consultants.

[f] $15,077 corresponds to travels of consultants.

[g] These funds are earmarked as per funding agreements with donors. The number at year-end is determined by the date at which funds are received and the actual implementation periods of projects, which do not always run on a calendar year.

Table 2
Details of voluntary contributions for 2017[a]

(United States dollars)

Description	*Amount*
A. Voluntary contributions	
China	20 000
Cyprus	11 900
Estonia	11 614

Description	*Amount*
Finland	339 047
France	160 000
Germany	1 151 000
India	15 000
Ireland	114 063
Kazakhstan	10 000
Luxembourg	11 792
Netherlands	318 000
Pakistan	5 000
Philippines	5 000
Russian Federation	100 000
Sweden	45 814
Switzerland	210 402
Turkey	2 000
Hiroshima Prefecture	28 325
Carnegie Corporation of New York	245 000
Small Arms Survey	10 000
The Simons Foundation Canada	20 000
Refund to donors[b]	(68 478)
Subtotal, A	**2 765 479**
B. Other transfers and allocations	
Subvention from the United Nations regular budget	297 560
Office for Disarmament Affairs[c]	63 000
United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation	(27 638)
Subtotal, B	**332 862**
Total	**3 098 341**

[a] Figures from UNIDIR statement of financial performance for the year 2017. The statement was prepared in accordance with IPSAS, contributions are accounted for in the year when the pledge is signed, for present as well as for future years.

[b] In accordance with financing agreements, refunds are issued to donors when specific project activities are modified and result in actual expenditures being lower than the amount foreseen in the initial activity budget agreed upon by the funder.

[c] Earmarked funding for advisory services to support Groups of Governmental Experts.

Annex II

Projected revenue and expenses for 2018[a]

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Description	*2018*
Revenue	
Voluntary contributions	3 016
Investment income	16
Other transfers and allocations	434
Other revenue	24
Total revenue	**3 490**
Expenses	
Direct expenditure	
Employee salaries, allowances and benefits	1 574
Non-employee compensation and allowances	337
Grants and other transfers	40
Supplies and consumables	2
Travel	147
Other operating expenses	201
Programme support and prorated expenses	106
Other expenses	15
Total expenses	**2 422**
Surplus/(deficit) for the year[b]	**1 068**

[a] Projections for 2018 were calculated as an average of the years 2014, 2015 and 2017, plus 1 per cent (see A/72/154).

[b] Funds earmarked as per funding agreements with donors. The number at year-end is determined by the date at which funds are received and the actual implementation periods of projects, which do not always run on a calendar year.

Annex III

Projected revenue and expenses for 2019[a]

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Description	*2019*
Revenue	
Voluntary contributions	2 960
Investment income	27
Other transfers and allocations	409
Other revenue	25
Total revenue	**3 421**
Expenses	
Employee salaries, allowances and benefits	1 815
Non-employee compensation and allowances	396
Grants and other transfers	50
Supplies and consumables	2
Travel	156
Other operating expenses	207
Programme support and prorated expenses	132
Other expenses	13
Total expenses	**2 771**
Surplus/(deficit) for the year[b]	**650**

[a] Projections for 2019 were calculated as an average of the years 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018, plus 1 per cent, except for the following categories: employee salaries, allowances and benefits, which shows standard salary costs for United Nations contract holders; and programme support and prorated expenses.

[b] Funds earmarked as per funding agreements with donors. The number at year-end is determined by the date at which funds are received and the actual implementation periods of projects, which do not always run on a calendar year.

Annex IV

Institutional operations budget for 2019

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Description	*Amount*
Institutional staff[a]	
D-2 (Director)	321.4
P-5 (Deputy to the Director)	265.6
P-5 (Chief of Research)	265.6
P-4 (Finance and Budget Officer)	225.8
P-4 (Public Information Officer)	225.8
P-2 (Associate Administrative Officer)	153.1
1 GS (OL) (Team/Administrative Assistant)	171.7
Subtotal, institutional staff	**1 629.0**
Travel	30.0
Communications and outreach	70.0
Information and Communications Technology Service	20.0
Telecommunications	10.0
Miscellaneous operating costs	15.0
Subtotal, institutional operating costs	**145.0**
Subtotal	**1 774.0**
Programme support costs	88.7
Total	**1 862.7**

Abbreviation: GS (OL), General Service (Other level).

[a] Based on budget information system standard salary costs for the year 2019, applicable to Geneva (version 6). The institutional team is presented here as comprising seven staff responsible for: support and supervision of research-related activities; provision of support and advisory services to various stakeholders; and delivery of institutional tasks. Institutional tasks are independent of the amount of research-related work and include, among others, tasks necessary: to conceptualize and oversee the research agenda and resource mobilization strategy; to communicate research findings; to represent UNIDIR; to establish and maintain research networks; to report to the UNIDIR Board of Trustees; and to comply with other United Nations requirements. These institutional functions are identified in the independent third-party assessment of UNIDIR.

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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Report of the Secretary-General on the issue of child, early and forced marriage

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/175 of 17 November 2016 on child, early and forced marriage and builds on the previous report of the Secretary-General on the same subject (A/71/253).

The present report presents an overview of progress in efforts to eliminate child, early and forced marriage during the period from June 2016 to May 2018.

* A/73/150.

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I. Introduction

1. General Assembly resolution 71/175 of 17 November 2016 on child, early and forced marriage took note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General (A/71/253) and requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on progress towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide, before the end of its seventy-second session.

2. A note verbale was sent on 22 September 2017, requesting information from Member States and other stakeholders. As at 15 March 2018, 24 responses had been received from Member States,[1] 10 from national human rights institutions,[2] and 12 from United Nations bodies and civil society organizations.[3] The present report is based on these submissions, available in full on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.[4]

3. The prevalence of child marriage is decreasing globally, according to available data, with the proportion of women who were married as children having decreased by 15 per cent in the past decade.[5] According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the total number of girls married in childhood is estimated at 12 million a year. Progress in the last decade has resulted in an accumulated global reduction of 25 million fewer child marriages than would have been anticipated at all levels a decade ago.[6] Despite this global trend, the prevalence rates of child marriage, early union and adolescent pregnancy remain high, particularly in some regions.

4. Overall, during the reporting period, from June 2016 to May 2018, there has been increasing attention and action to eliminate child, early and forced marriage. However, gaps still remain both in legal and policy frameworks and in ensuring the sustainability of efforts to end the practice.

II. Developments at the international and regional levels

5. Since the international community agreed on the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5.3 on the elimination of harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage, increasing attention to this issue has been paid at the international and regional levels by mechanisms to end child, early and forced marriage, resulting in important political commitments and normative, policy and programmatic guidance.

6. In its resolution on the girl child,[7] the General Assembly explicitly acknowledged the severe impact of child, early and forced marriages on girls' enjoyment of their

[1] Member States include Albania, Australia, Azerbaijan, Burundi, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, France, Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, Mauritius, Mexico, Honduras, Oman, Uganda, Switzerland, Turkey, Slovenia, Spain, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United States of America and Zambia.

[2] National human rights institutions from the following countries submitted information: Armenia, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, France, Jordan, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Serbia and Sri Lanka.

[3] Aide Rapide aux Victimes des Catastrophes-Democratic Republic of the Congo, Asia Pacific Alliance, Association nationale de la promotion et protection des droits de l'homme, Centre for Reproductive Rights, Girls Not Brides, Journalists and Writers Foundation, Plan International, Save the Children, Save the Children and Oxfam Mexico, Youth Association for Development, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

[4] See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/Documentation.aspx.

[5] See E/2017/66 and UNICEF, "25 million child marriages prevented in last decade due to accelerated progress, according to new UNICEF estimates", press release, 6 March 2018. Available at www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/25-million-child-marriages-prevented.

[6] UNICEF, "25 million child marriages prevented".

[7] General Assembly resolution 72/154.

human rights and as a cause and a consequence of violations of other rights. The General Assembly urged States to enact, uphold and strictly enforce laws and policies aimed at preventing and ending child, early and forced marriage and protecting those at risk, and to ensure that marriage is entered into only with the informed, free and full consent of the intending spouse. Numerous further resolutions by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council reiterate the need for States to consider the impact of child, early and forced marriage in relation to issues such as birth registration, maternal mortality or disability.[8]

7. The diversity of contexts in which child, early and forced marriage occurs has been recognized, and attention to specific settings, in particular humanitarian settings and armed conflict, has been increased. The Human Rights Council dedicated resolution 35/16 of June 2017 to the issue of child, early and forced marriage in humanitarian settings, noting that the practice is highly exacerbated in those settings and urging States to develop and implement holistic, comprehensive and coordinated responses, strategies and policies to prevent, respond to and eliminate child, early and forced marriage.[9] The Secretary-General and the Human Rights Council also reported on the harmful practice in their respective reports on children in armed conflict and the rights of the child in humanitarian settings.[10] Furthermore, concern about child, early and forced marriage was expressed in multiple country-specific resolutions and with regard to women and girls in rural areas.[11]

8. United Nations human rights mechanisms have provided further guidance in relation to the elimination of child, early and forced marriage. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in its general recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, highlights in particular the importance of repealing discriminatory laws, including provisions that allow child, early and forced marriage or that waive prosecution or punishment of sexual assault where the victim is subsequently married to the perpetrator.[12] The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also stress the mutually reinforcing impact of child, early and forced marriages on interconnected human rights, such as education.[13] In general comment No. 20 on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence, the Committee on the Rights of the Child underlines that child, early and forced marriage is a manifestation and consequence of discrimination and violence during adolescence. The 2017 joint general comment of that Committee and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families focuses on the human rights of children in the context of international migration and recommends that States establish early identification measures to detect persons who

[8] See General Assembly resolutions on women in development (72/234) and on the situation of women and girls with disabilities (72/162), and Human Rights Council resolutions on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights (33/18); birth registration and the right of everyone to recognition everywhere as a person before the law (34/15); and accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women, and engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls (35/10).

[9] See Human Rights Council resolution 35/16.

[10] See A/72/361–S/2017/821 and A/HRC/37/33.

[11] See General Assembly resolutions 72/188 (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) and 72/189 (Islamic Republic of Iran), and Human Rights Council resolution 35/35 (Eritrea), and General Assembly resolution 72/148 on the improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas.

[12] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19. See also 2017 concluding observations CEDAW/C/NGA/CO/7-8, CEDAW/C/NER/CO/3-4, CEDAW/C/ROU/CO/7-8, CEDAW/C/FSM/CO/1-3.

[13] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education, and Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, general comment No. 3 (2016) on women and girls with disabilities.

might be at risk of child marriage.[14] Other Committees, in their concluding observations, have also issued recommendations to States parties on specific measures that States must take to address child, early and forced marriage.[15]

9. Special procedures of the Human Rights Council have regularly called for the establishment and implementation of legal frameworks to eliminate child, early and forced marriages.[16] They have also recognized the interrelationship between child, early and forced marriage and other human rights violations, such as violations of the right to education and the right to freedom of religion or belief.[17] Specific references to eradicating child, early and forced marriage have also been made in their thematic reports.[18]

10. Regional organizations have also focused on the eradication of child, early and forced marriage during the reporting period. Notably, in January 2018, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child adopted a joint general comment on ending child marriage.[19] The general comment notes that the prevalence of child marriage and its impacts are a major concern on the African continent. It outlines specific obligations stemming from article 6 (b) of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and article 21 (2) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. In March 2018, the African Union, as part of its regional campaign to end child marriage, organized in Kigali the second African Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa. Thus far, 22 countries have signed up to the campaign and committed to accelerate efforts at the national level. In October 2017, a high-level meeting on ending child marriage in West and Central Africa was held in Dakar with the participation of 24 countries from West and Central Africa. The outcome document, the "Dakar Call to Action", calls upon governments to, among others, reinforce the data and evidence base for the development, implementation and monitoring of policies, strategies and programmes to end child marriage. The call to action urges governments to collaborate with relevant stakeholders and in particular to ensure that religious and traditional leaders play a central role in spreading awareness of the dangers of child marriage and in changing social norms around the practice.[20]

11. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a declaration in September 2017 on the need to intensify efforts to prevent and combat female genital

[14] Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families/No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return.

[15] See CCPR/C/BGD/CO/1, CCPR/C/BIH/CO/3, CCPR/C/KAZ/CO/2, CCPR/C/SVN/CO/3, CERD/C/ARM/CO/7-11, E/C.12/AGO/CO/4-5, E/C.12/NAM/CO/1 and CAT/C/FIN/CO/7.

[16] A/72/164, paras. 20, 25, 27 and 85 (c); and A/72/139, para. 59 (l).

[17] A/HRC/34/50, paras. 49 and 50 and A/72/496, para. 32.

[18] For example, the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, in their thematic report on reasserting equality, countering rollbacks (A/HRC/38/46), and the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on adequacy of the international legal framework on violence against women (A/72/134).

[19] African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, "Joint general comment on ending child marriage", 2017, available at www.achpr.org/news/2018/01/d321/.

[20] "Ending child marriage in West and Central Africa: the Dakar call to action", outcome document of the high-level meeting on ending child marriage in West and Central Africa Dakar, Senegal, October 2017.

mutilation and child, early and forced marriage in Europe.[21] In December 2017, the Steering Committee for Human Rights of the Council of Europe developed a compilation of good and promising practices aimed at preventing and combating female genital mutilation and forced marriage.[22]

12. In November 2016, the Organization of American States hosted an international forum in Washington, D.C., on child, early and forced marriage and motherhood, to establish priority areas for action,[23] including strengthening data collection.[24] In March 2017, the Committee of Experts of the Mechanism to Follow Up on Implementation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women released a report on sexual violence and child pregnancy. In the report, the Committee expressed concern regarding the continuing discrepancies in the minimum age for marriage between girls and boys, and the broad margin existing in almost all States for exceptions to this minimum age, particularly in case of pregnancy.[25]

13. Other multilateral and donor-led initiatives on child, early and forced marriage also intensified during the reporting period. In June 2017, the joint United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage published its first progress report.[26]

14. Governments are increasingly including gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a priority of their foreign policy, including attention to child, early and forced marriage. For example, the Swiss Government included the topic in its international cooperation 2017–2020, in support to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5.[27] The feminist foreign policy 2015–2018 of Sweden included an explicit focus on defending sexual and reproductive health and rights, including by combating child, early and forced marriages.[28] In 2017, the Canadian Government adopted a feminist international assistance policy, focusing, among others, on support for comprehensive approaches that help address child, early and forced marriages.[29] Child marriage also featured in the efforts under the "She Decides" initiative, which is supported by numerous governments and other institutions.[30]

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[21] Council of Europe, Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the need to intensify the efforts to prevent and combat female genital mutilation and forced marriage in Europe, adopted by the Committee of Ministers at the 1293rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, 13 September 2017.

[22] Council of Europe, "Guide to good and promising practices aimed at preventing and combating female genital mutilation and forced marriage", adopted by the Steering Committee for Human Rights at its 87th meeting, June 2017.

[23] See www.oas.org/en/cim/docs/IDEVAW-ConceptNote-EN.pdf.

[24] Organization of American States, "Let them be children: combatting child and early marriage and union in the Americas", press release, 13 April 2017. Available at www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-031/17.

[25] Organization of American States and the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention, *Hemispheric Report on Child Pregnancy in the States Party to the Belém do Pará Convention* (2016). Available at www.oas.org/es/mesecvi/docs/MESECVI-EmbarazoInfantil-EN.pdf.

[26] UNFPA and UNICEF, *UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage: Progress Report 2016*, June 2017.

[27] See www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/sdc/strategy/legal-bases/message-international-cooperation-2017-2020/strategic-objectives.html.

[28] See Sweden, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Swedish foreign service action plan for feminist foreign policy 2015–2018 including focus areas for 2017", 2017. Available at www.government.se/information-material/2017/02/swedish-foreign-service-action-plan-for-feminist-foreign-policy-20152018-including-focus-areas-for-2017.

[29] See www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/campaign-campagne/iap-pai.

[30] See www.shedecides.com.

III. Legislative measures and enforcement of national legislation

15. There has been a sharp increase in efforts to raise the minimum legal age for marriage and address discrepancies between girls and boys in this regard. Since 2012, 15 countries have raised the minimum age to 18 or removed existing exceptions.[31] In 2017, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, the Netherlands and Trinidad and Tobago reformed their civil and family codes, raised the minimum age of marriage for boys and girls to 18 and repealed all the exceptions that allowed marriage under this age.[32] For example, El Salvador amended article 14 of its family code, which previously had allowed girls and adolescents under 18 years of age to marry in case of sexual violence and pregnancy. In Malawi, a constitutional amendment was adopted in April 2017 to set the minimum age of marriage, previously at 15 years, at 18 for both sexes.

16. Reportedly, while 88 per cent of countries have established 18 as the legal minimum age of marriage, over 100 countries still legally allow the marriage of children under the age of 18 in certain circumstances,[33] and in many cases marriage is still possible under that age justified by customary or religious laws.[34] For example, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cuba, Jordan, the Niger, Sierra Leone, Slovenia and Zambia have provisions which allow for marriage under 18 years of age, with the permission of a judge or with parental consent, often as early as 15 or 16 years of age.[35] In federal states, even when a minimum age of marriage is set at the national level, state-level exceptions can still be allowed. For instance, in Mexico, most states still allow marriages under 18 years of age, although the federal law established 18 as the minimum age for marriage. In other instances, the implementation of laws on the minimum age of marriage is also hampered by the lack of free and compulsory civil registration laws, which are utilized to evade registration of the marriage until the child reaches 18 years of age.

17. States also reported on enacting legislation criminalizing child marriage. Several sources indicated that Australia, Burundi, Cameroon, Lebanon, Serbia, Spain and Turkey have amended their criminal codes and enhanced sanctions for perpetrators of child, early and forced marriage. In Cameroon, the provisions of the criminal code were amended in 2016 to punish forced marriage by 5 to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of up to $2,000. Similarly, Australia reported that its Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995 criminalizes coercive and or fraudulent ways that force someone to enter into a marriage without their full and free consent. Australia strengthened the sanctions and increased the related penalties to up to nine years' imprisonment in 2015. Spain reported that its amended criminal code now includes child and forced marriage as one of the purposes of trafficking. In 2016, Burundi adopted a law on gender-based violence that criminalizes child marriage. In 2017, Serbia amended its criminal code to criminalize child and forced marriage as

[31] Girls not Brides, "The case for a minimum age of marriage of 18", December 2017.

[32] Parliamentarians for Global Action, "Global parliamentary campaign to end child, early and forced marriage", available at www.pgaction.org/campaigns/cefm.html, and Girls Not Brides, "2017 in review: 6 signs we made progress towards ending child marriage", 19 December 2017, available at www.girlsnotbrides.org/2017-review-6-signs-made-progress-towards-ending-child-marriage/.

[33] See Aleksandra Sandstorm and Angelina E. Theodorou, "Many countries allow child marriage", Pew Research Centre, 12 September 2016. Available at www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/12/many-countries-allow-child-marriage/.

[34] World Policy Analysis Centre, "Assessing national action on protection from child marriage", fact sheet, March 2015. Available at www.worldpolicycenter.org/sites/default/files/WORLD_Fact_Sheet_Legal_Protection_Against_Child_Marriage_2015.pdf, and UNFPA and UNICEF, *2016 Progress Report*. See also Sandstorm and Theodorou, "Many countries allow child marriage".

[35] See also UNFPA and UNICEF *Progress Report 2016*.

part of the harmonization of national legislation with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.[36]

18. The decisions of some high courts have strengthened protection from child marriage. The High Court of Tanzania ruled against national laws that set different minimum legal ages for marriage for girls and for boys.[37] Similarly, on 11 October 2017, the Supreme Court of India ruled that sexual intercourse, even within marriage, with a child under 18 years of age amounts to rape.

19. During the reporting period, some countries have made efforts towards amending provisions which condoned or even encouraged child and forced marriage. For instance, in 2017, Jordan repealed article 308 of its criminal code that allowed perpetrators of rape to avoid prosecution by marrying their victim. Lebanon amended article 522 of the criminal code to prohibit marriage of perpetrators of sexual violence with their victims.

20. Some countries referred to public discussion on amending legislation. For example, the Sudan accepted recommendations on increasing the minimum age for marriage to 18, made during the second cycle of the universal periodic review, and is working on revising its national legislation to that effect. Amendments to the 2015 Domestic Violence Act in Sri Lanka have been drafted to strengthen the legal response to domestic violence and other forms of violence against women and girls, including child, early and forced marriage. The national human rights institution of Mexico mentioned efforts taken to change the civil legislation to end child, early and forced marriages at state level to address inconsistencies that exist in their federal system.

IV. Policies and action plans

21. Evidence shows that national legislation and initiatives to end the practice must be locally contextualized and implemented in a coordinated manner, both horizontally across sectors and vertically to align national policy to local level realities. In the past six years, several countries have launched national strategies or action plans with an explicit focus on addressing child marriage,[38] and at least 20 more countries are developing national strategies.[39] Since the most recent report, some States have taken steps to develop and reinforce their national strategies through coordinated mechanisms. For instance, Burkina Faso developed its "costed plan" through a multisectoral partnership platform and the Niger established a national committee for the coordination of actions aiming at ending child marriage and integrated child marriage into the national action plan for adolescents (2015–2018).[40] In Turkey, the national action plan on combating early and forced marriages (2018–2023) was elaborated with the cooperation and participation of public institutions and civil society organizations. The 2017 Zambia national strategy on child and forced marriage aims to address negative attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and practices in order to reduce children's vulnerability to child marriage. Other countries, including Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Burundi, France and the Niger, developed action plans which focus on access to information for children and adolescents about sexual and reproductive health rights and services.[41]

[36] Republic of Serbia, Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code, *Official Gazette*, No. 94/16 (November 2016).

[37] See www.girlsnotbrides.org/high-court-tanzania-child-marriage/.

[38] Girls not Brides, "The case for a minimum age of marriage of 18", December 2017.

[39] Ibid.

[40] UNFPA and UNICEF, *Progress Report 2016*.

[41] Ibid.

22. Several submissions emphasized that the enforcement of some action plans is monitored and supported through specific measures or institutions. In Serbia for example, the Government established a council for combating domestic violence to improve coordination of government bodies and institutions to prevent domestic violence, also covering child, early and forced marriage. In Switzerland, the national action plan (2013–2017) was subjected to an external evaluation process in October 2017 to measure its effectiveness, which in turn informed the Government's next steps for 2018–2021. In Zambia, the Government established an interministerial consortium on ending child marriage in 2016. The consortium consists of 15 ministries coordinated by the Ministry of Gender and is responsible, in collaboration with other key stakeholders, for ensuring regular monitoring and evaluation of the national strategy.

23. Submissions indicated that integrating measures to address child, early and forced marriage within broader protection and policy frameworks, such as those related to gender equality, gender-based violence, child protection, trafficking or education, contributed to addressing societal and community risk factors in specific contexts. Albania adopted a national action plan for the rights of children (2017–2020) with one main strategic goal being the elimination of all forms of violence against children. Burundi reported on strategic interventions undertaken in the education system to prevent girls from dropping out of school, to delay child marriage. Burundi's national strategy on gender equality (2012–2020) and other initiatives related to girls' and women's education included the establishment of local committees to provide prevention, identification and alert services when girls appeared to be at risk of dropping out of school. Turkey reported on the implementation of its third national action plan on combating violence against women (2016–2020), supplemented with its strategy on eliminating child, early and forced marriage.

24. In Azerbaijan, the national action plan on combating human trafficking focuses on children that are at risk of trafficking or exploitation, including for the purpose of child marriage. Chile is developing a national plan for the prevention and eradication of violence, including child marriage, which sets out a series of actions, commitments and results relating to different contexts such as family, school and the community. In Spain, the second national strategy for the elimination of violence against women (2018–2022) will explicitly refer to measures to combat child and forced marriages. Sri Lanka adopted an action plan on domestic violence and a plan of action to address sexual and gender-based violence, such as child, early and forced marriage. Slovenia adopted a national programme of action for Roma people (2017–2021) that provides for actions on early and forced marriages.

V. Engagement with religious, traditional and community leaders, civil society families and the media

25. During the reporting period, UNFPA and UNICEF worked through the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage to create community dialogues, public service announcements and other far-reaching media campaigns to inform and sensitize community members about the dangers of child marriage and the benefits of investing in adolescent girls. These initiatives have reached more than 1.6 million individuals in targeted countries since 2016, including girls, boys, religious leaders, elders and key decision makers.[42]

26. With support from the UNFPA and UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, Uganda engaged at least 48,000 adult individuals in

[42] Ibid.

community dialogues, resulting in community leaders, religious and other leaders making public commitments to support the eradication of child marriage in their communities. Over 16,000 parents, leaders and community members signed pledge cards to support initiatives aimed at ending child marriage in their communities.[43] In Azerbaijan, more than 100,000 families were informed about the national legislation on child, early and forced marriage, through a dedicated campaign between 2014 and 2017.

27. Several countries reported organizing community dialogues with influential actors, such as traditional and religious leaders. In Australia, capacity-building efforts that started in 2015 with key religious figures continued in 2017. This included the holding of a series of training sessions in each state and territory, between government entities, civil society and faith-based organizations. The aim was to develop the capacity of first responders and frontline service providers to identify and respond to suspected cases of forced marriage. According to media reports, in Zambia, the ministry of chiefs and traditional affairs has enhanced work with traditional leaders in order to address harmful cultural practices. Most of the traditional leaders have now pledged zero tolerance.[44]

VI. Economic empowerment of girls and women, and access to education

28. During the reporting period, several stakeholders have devoted efforts to expand girls' and women's access to economic and education opportunities.

29. With regard to access to quality education, Zambia, with support from the World Bank, launched in 2015 a girls' education and women's empowerment and livelihood project, which will run until 2020. An aspect of the project is the "Keeping the girls in school" initiative, which aims to increase and improve access to secondary education for the most disadvantaged girls in selected districts by covering their tuition fees. In Ethiopia, more than 51,000 girls received support for improved retention and performance at schools through girls' clubs, counselling and training for educators on child marriage.[45] Furthermore, Zambia is taking specific measures to help adolescent girls who are married or pregnant to continue their education, through special measures such as the possibility of taking leave for a year or taking exams from home while pregnant. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, support was provided to ensure that married and pregnant girls continue and complete studies.

30. Ensuring young people have accurate and comprehensive information about sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as gender-based violence, are important aspects of building their confidence and capacity to make decisions. Azerbaijan organized campaigns and training sessions that targeted secondary school students, on topics related to human trafficking, reproductive health, domestic violence and child, early and forced marriage. In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Education, in partnership with Plan International and UNFPA, has been piloting comprehensive sexuality education in schools targeting predominantly adolescents from 10 to 14 years of age through Generation Breakthrough Programme. The programme informed them about their sexual and reproductive health and rights and contributed to reducing their vulnerability to exploitation, child marriage and sexual

[43] Ibid.

[44] See "Traditional leaders commit to fighting GBV, child marriage", *Zambia Daily Mail*, 10 June 2017, available at www.daily-mail.co.zm/traditional-leaders-commit-to-fighting-gbv-child-marriage/, and "Hope glimmers as chiefs' mindsets change", *Zambia Daily Mail*, 4 September 2017, available at www.daily-mail.co.zm/hope-glimmers-as-chiefs-mindsets-change/.

[45] UNFPA and UNICEF, *Progress Report 2016*.

harassment within schools. In Burundi, the Government, in collaboration with its partners, launched an awareness raising campaign "zero pregnancy in school up to 2030", which included comprehensive and age-appropriate sexuality education for adolescents in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies and ensuing child marriage. Thailand adopted comprehensive sexuality education as a key pillar of the 2016 Prevention and Solution of Adolescent Pregnancy Act, a law aimed at enshrining the rights of young persons to sexual and reproductive health information and services.[46] Despite these measures, the effective protection of young people requires full access to reproductive and health services, including information and contraception services.

31. Other initiatives targeted girls with low levels of education to offer them vocational or informal education opportunities. For instance, Plan International, through the Yes I Do project trained 64 adolescents in two districts in Malawi using the village savings and loans associations model as a tool of self-initiated economic empowerment. Similarly, Kuwait implemented a project for vocational training and economic support for women and girls who are divorced or widowed. The Commonwealth of Learning "GIRLS Inspire" programme provided in 2017 educational opportunities to 25,000 girls and women who had never been to school or had dropped out owing to barriers such as child, early and force marriage. In Bangladesh and Pakistan for instance, the programme established schools on boats and mobile learning centres for girls in remote areas.[47]

32. Uganda, with the support of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, made it possible for over 168,050 girls and boys from 10 to 19 years of age in 55 targeted districts to participate in empowerment and livelihood programmes, through adolescents' clubs, community dialogues, formal and non-formal education, financial literacy workshops and mentoring. The United States of America has funded initiatives on adolescent girls' education in Ethiopia, Paraguay and Zambia, which focussed on girls at high risk of entering child labour, to increase their life skills and access to vocational services.

33. Creating safe spaces for girls to mentor and support each other has been another strategy to prevent child marriage and support girls already married. In Latin America, Plan International, in partnership with the Commission for Children and Youth of the Continental Liaison of Indigenous Women created spaces to provide training in leadership and political empowerment for indigenous adolescent girls and young women, for them to regain control over their lives and actively participate in decisions affecting them. In Sierra Leone, in 2016, UNICEF and UNFPA supported the establishment of 74 new girls' clubs, and UNFPA established 80 new girls' clubs in addition to the already existing 257. These clubs provided at least 4,000 adolescents with life skills and strengthened their capacities to protect themselves from abuse and exploitation.[48]

VII. Awareness raising, training and capacity-building

34. During the reporting period, the revision of text books and curricula was used to challenge gender stereotypes supporting child marriage in Burundi, Serbia and

[46] UNICEF-East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, "Addressing the patterns of child marriage, early union and teen pregnancy in Southeast Asia: a matter of urgency", press release, 16 April 2018, available at www.unicef.org/eap/press-releases/addressing-patterns-child-marriage-early-union-and-teen-pregnancy-southeast-asia.

[47] Commonwealth of Learning, "Education for access, quality and advocacy", available at http://girlsinspire.col.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Education-for-Access-Quality-and-Advocacy-Infocard.pdf.

[48] UNFPA and UNICEF, *Progress Report 2016*.

Zambia. These initiatives were supplemented in Burundi and Serbia with information campaigns to increase students' awareness on how to challenge harmful gender norms linked to child marriage.

35. Some countries have engaged in awareness raising on the impact of child, early and forced marriage among the general public, through conferences, information meetings and publications. For instance, in 2017 the Ministry of Labour, Family Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of Slovenia organized an international conference on the gender perspective on health care and integration of migrants, which focused on how to combat harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage. Slovenia further published a handbook for migrant women and men with a focus on harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage in 2016. The Syrian Arab Republic conducted similar campaigns on health education to raise awareness of the harmful impact of cultural and social behaviour that lead to discrimination and violence, including child and forced marriage. The United States launched a $7 million programme in Afghanistan aimed at addressing child, early and forced marriage, including a campaign highlighting the negative health, economic and social consequences of this practice for girls.

36. UNICEF and UNFPA reported on a television series on adolescence, gender and empowerment, which reached an estimated 2.8 million people in India between October and December 2016. Radio programmes that reached 85 per cent of the population were broadcast in the Niger. Social media messaging on gender-based violence prevention reached up to 35,000 adolescents in Mozambique.[49]

37. National human rights institutions also played a critical role in increasing awareness. The ombudsman in the Plurinational State of Bolivia launched an information and awareness raising campaign in 2016 on child, early and forced marriage. The aim of the campaign was to reach students in El Alto and neighbouring municipalities and inform them about the consequences of child, early and forced marriage. The Mexican National Human Rights Commission reported holding workshops and training courses on the topic of child, early and forced marriages for public servants and the broader society, in particular for indigenous peoples and communities.

38. Increased attention has been paid to training professionals in the education, health and social services sectors and the police in order to recognize risk signs and identify girls in child marriage situations and support them. For instance, France developed information programmes for teachers and other education professionals on ways to combat harmful practices. Switzerland organized a seminar for professionals from various sectors, including the police, social services, schools, integration services, child protection and victim support services, on child, early and forced marriages in 2016 and a national day for professionals on the same topic in October 2017. Currently, Switzerland is financing the establishment of a national competency centre against forced marriages, which will provide accessible advice and support services for survivors and professionals working with them. Uganda, with support from the World Bank, implemented measures to train health, police and judiciary staff on gender-sensitive services for survivors of sexual violence, including child marriage.

39. States expanded their awareness-raising and information efforts, to include sectors such as tourism, border control and immigration. Slovenia conducted specific training sessions on gender-based violence, including child and forced marriage, for staff in accommodation centres and other entities working with migrants.

[49] Ibid., p. 39.

VIII. Protection mechanisms and services for married girls and girls at risk

40. States reported on measures taken to strengthen the mechanisms and services to protect girls and women affected by child and forced marriage. Several countries have provided for specialized services within the police. In Zambia, a victim's support unit within the police is mandated to deal with all cases of gender-based violence, including child and forced marriage. In addition, fast-track courts have been established since 2016 with the aim of accelerating cases and providing remedies to victims of gender-based violence. Albania established child protection units to intervene in emergencies.

41. Several countries enhanced their referral systems and initiated prosecutions against alleged perpetrators. Australia reported that, as at 30 June 2017, the federal police had received 183 referrals involving persons in or at risk of forced marriage. In Serbia, since the amendment of its criminal code in November 2016, the judiciary prosecuted three individuals for criminal offences on the ground of human trafficking for the purpose of forced marriage.

42. Various initiatives underlined the adoption of reporting mechanisms to enhance the protection of the persons at risk of child and forced marriage. The main tools used were either a helpline or regular field visits and watchdog systems, including in school settings. Uganda established a child help line, a national gender-based violence database, an online platform and mobile applications. Oman launched a free hotline for reporting any type of child abuse, which offers guidance and support to victims. Albania, Azerbaijan, Burundi, France and Sri Lanka set up hotlines to receive complaints of gender-based violence and provide free legal advice. In Azerbaijan, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, in collaboration with social workers, conducted regular visits in schools and engaged with families at risk of subjecting their children to child marriage. At least 2,000 families were contacted. In Mauritius, 22 Community Child Watch Committees operate in high-risk areas to ensure early detection of children at risk of child marriage. The Ugandan Human Rights Commission has integrated gender-based violence and harmful practices into its human rights monitoring mandate.

43. In 2017, Albania approved a child protection law providing for a comprehensive system for the protection of children, including the establishment of child protection units within every administrative unit in each municipality, which are mandated to assess and monitor the situation of children and families at risk of violence, including of child marriage, coordinate local level protection and response, and intervene in emergency situations such as child marriage.

44. Some countries have developed services for specific situations of vulnerability, such as humanitarian situations or situations of child labour. For instance, Switzerland focuses in its foreign aid on the special needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls in situations of armed conflict, by increasing access to comprehensive services such as medical or psychosocial support. In Australia, the Government's Human Trafficking Visa Framework has enabled people in, or at risk of, forced marriage who are not Australian citizens or permanent residents to remain in Australia and receive support under certain conditions. In Jordan, protection units are established in refugee camps with the aim of preventing or mitigating the consequences of child, early and forced marriage. This is supplemented by a new scheme issued in 2016 for shelters for women at risk of violence, including child marriage, aimed at protecting and offering temporary refuge until their cases are resolved.

45. In 2017 and 2018, the Ministry of Health of Slovenia funded health-care programmes addressing the health of Roma girls and women focusing on forced

marriages, through counselling, care and information on sexual and reproductive health. The Zambian Government set up village-led and health-facility-based "one-stop shops" providing holistic services to victims of gender-based violence, including sexual and reproductive health services.

IX. Recent studies

46. In January 2017, Plan International published qualitative research entitled "Family honour and shattered dreams: girl brides in Mali, Niger and Senegal", highlighting that protection of family, honour and the risk of shame are the driving factors behind child, early and forced marriage in this region. The study concluded that criminalization and strong legalistic approaches towards child marriage are unlikely to produce positive results and instead risk alienating communities and driving the practice of child, early and forced marriage underground, particularly in contexts where the actual age of girls is considered of little importance and readiness for marriage is determined by signs of puberty. Research conducted by Plan International in Bangladesh explained that the key assets with which children and adolescents can overcome the practice include negotiation skills, financial support and supportive and "gender-sensitive" male family members. Other research carried out in Nepal and Ethiopia on the intersectionality between child marriage and disability underlines how disability further aggravates the consequences and impact of child marriage.

47. UNICEF and UNFPA supported a number of studies and evaluations to strengthen the effectiveness and evidence base of their joint Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage. UNICEF and UNFPA worked together on a mapping of child marriage initiatives in South Asia and West and Central Africa. A study conducted by the World Bank and the International Centre for Research on Women, in partnership with Plan International, demonstrates the negative economic impacts of the practice in four key areas (fertility and population, violence, education and labour) and suggests that investing in ending child marriage has considerable economic benefits.

X. Gaps and challenges

48. The submissions reveal increasing efforts to reform laws and policies to effectively prohibit child, early and forced marriage. As noted above, while this is a positive trend, reforms to legal and policy frameworks should not be taken in isolation from other measures to address child, early and forced marriage; furthermore, the law and policy reforms have been slow, with uneven outcomes. Many countries established a minimum age of 18 for marriage in national law and policies, yet exceptions to the rule persist. In other instances, there are discrepancies between civil/common law and customary law, with limited efforts in the prosecution of offenders.[50] The analysis of national plural legal systems continues to reveal some inconsistencies that undermine the victims' right to seek and obtain legal protection. Furthermore, increasingly unstable contexts put the progress achieved at risk.

49. Few efforts have been reported in terms of addressing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination that place specific groups of women and girls at risk of child and forced marriage based on, inter alia, their age, disability status, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, geographic location, and social and migration status. Research indicates for instance, that child marriage prevalence in the poorest areas is

[50] Lebanon reported that there is no unified law for marriage and a different law applies to each girl according to her religious community. Some religious communities have set the minimum age of marriage as early as 9 years of age.

2.5 times higher than in wealthy ones. These disparities appear across and within countries and regions.[51]

50. Initiatives on empowering girls through education have delayed the age of marriage in certain settings. But very few submissions reported efforts to provide girls with sustained economic opportunities and to address entrenched economic incentives to child marriage, such as dowries and bride-wealth payments, as well as to address the misperception of marriage as a form of protection.

51. Some States describe efforts to involve the health, social and education sectors at national and local levels in the elaboration and implementation of their national strategies to end child marriage. However, the involvement of other sectors such as economic, legislative and judiciary sectors, as well as systematic and genuine participation by civil society have rarely been reported. From the submissions received, it also appears that scaled-up and sustained efforts are needed to engage with community-based actors, particularly older women, religious and traditional leaders, family members and men and boys as agents of change. Very few submissions focused on accountability mechanisms and efforts by the judiciary to provide legal protection to survivors of the practice.

52. Several submissions stressed the lack of implementation of legal and policy frameworks and funding shortages as significant challenges to ending child, early and forced marriages. Only a few submissions reported that funds supported initiatives, including at the local and community levels.

53. Overall, a lack of reliable data and indicators on child marriage and violence against children remains a major challenge for programming, including in humanitarian contexts. Many surveys and data collection systems, such as civil registration systems, record only formal marriages, while the practice of child and forced marriage often includes a wider set of informal unions, which presents limitations for trend analysis and for comparability.[52] In humanitarian settings, data and information about the situation of displaced girls and women is lacking and often anecdotal. Beyond the online compilation of statistics, the use of information and communication technologies, including digital applications, has yet to be explored.

XI. Conclusions and recommendations

54. **From information received from States since the most recent report of the Secretary-General on this subject, efforts to end child, early and forced marriage have increased at the international, regional and national levels. Continued research on the prevalence and impact of child, early and forced marriage has led to a greater understanding and the development of some evidence-based policy initiatives.**

55. **However, strategies and initiatives continue to not be costed, funded, implemented or enforced at the pace and scale needed. The following actions are recommended to Member States and other relevant stakeholders supporting their efforts:**

(a) **Dedicate more efforts to ensuring reporting on and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5.3 on the elimination of harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage, as well as related Goals and targets.**

[51] UNICEF, "Ending child marriage: progress and prospects", 2017.

[52] UN-Women, *Turning Promises Into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (New York, 2018).

Link the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals with the work and recommendations by human rights mechanisms;

(b) Harmonize national legislation in line with international human rights standards on child and forced marriage and amend or remove legal obstacles and loopholes preventing protection against the practice. Ensure that efforts to prohibit child marriage by law concord with efforts to address the root causes of the practice in communities that are particularly affected, including measures to address poverty and the economic incentives to child marriage, and ensure access to quality education, among others;

(c) Develop evidence-based holistic and cross-sectoral strategies and action plans to end child, early and forced marriage, combined with monitoring and accountability mechanisms. Strategies to prevent and respond to child and forced marriage should be grounded in research on the drivers of the practice and patterns of marriage and union in different contexts. Devising effective responses also requires the identification of and data-gathering on informal unions and marriage ceremonies without registration;

(d) Promote consistent data collection systems and statistics on child, early and forced marriage, including in humanitarian settings;

(e) Ensure a comprehensive, cross-sectoral approach in addressing child marriage in legislation, including by removing discriminatory provisions that condone or encourage child marriage, as well as discriminatory legislation relating to inheritance, nationality, labour, access to credit, legal standing and access to sexual and reproductive health services, among others;

(f) Ensure cross-ministerial, gender-responsive and accurate costing, planning and budgeting for effective implementation of national actions and programmes to eliminate child, early and forced marriages. Make information on budget and allocations publicly available;

(g) Address the intersecting factors of discrimination in the adoption and implementation of national strategies and policies to address child, early and forced marriage, including through meaningful consultation with affected groups;

(h) Dedicate more attention to the situation of married girls and boys in terms of access to education, employment and vocational training;

(i) Assess and implement accurately costed and funded national strategies which integrate the needs of women and girls at risk and of survivors of child, early and forced marriages in disaster risk reduction planning, and provide responses to humanitarian situations;

(j) Promote the use of technology for information exchange and the development of programmes that address child and forced marriage, including in humanitarian contexts. Further explore alternative monitoring tools, learning programmes and communication channels using information and communications technologies, to facilitate girls' and women's access to social and economic assets and to protection mechanisms and services. For example, the use of mobile phones and applications to provide open and distance learning and to gather data and report on the practice in remote areas;

(k) Continue working to change attitudes and social norms towards child and forced marriage in communities through strengthened collaboration with faith and community leaders, parents, teachers, women, men and children and by highlighting the negative effects of the practice on girls and the community, including its economic cost, and alternative opportunities for girls;

(l) **Invest in services and programmes that help remove the structural barriers that incentivize child and forced marriage, and prevent children from accessing support within the marriage, including access to safe and quality education, the provision of adolescent friendly health services, and alternatives for married girls and women who chose to leave the marriage;**

(m) **Promote meaningful participation and active consultation with children and adolescents, girls in particular, through education, leadership skills and safe spaces and support networks, to enable them to become agents of change in their communities. Share best practices of effective governmental engagement of youth leadership, girls' networks and adolescent advocacy groups in policy and programming;**

(n) **Invest in programmes to assess the effectiveness of staff training or educational measures, in combating child, early and forced marriages and to inform future measures, including in humanitarian settings where evidence is often anecdotal and unreliable;**

(o) **Strengthen accountability frameworks at the national and international levels. In particular, enhance the role of and collaboration between national human rights institutions, national statistical institutions and other monitoring and reporting frameworks, to better track and consistently report on child, early and forced marriage;**

(p) **Develop collaboration and cooperation between national, regional and global human rights mechanisms, in particular information on progress to end child marriage in national reports to treaty bodies, to regional mechanisms and to other mechanisms such as the universal periodic review. Use the treaty bodies and other human rights mechanisms complaint procedures to ensure greater accountability for child, early and forced marriage.**